NINTENDO POWER

Rayman Legends • ZombiU • Paper Mario: Sticker Star • Little Inferno • Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 • Tekken Tag Tournament 2

283

OCTOBER 2012

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Stuff of Legends 50

Ubisoft's limbless hero returns exclusively on Wii U. Find out why he could set a new standard for 2D platformers with Rayman Legends.

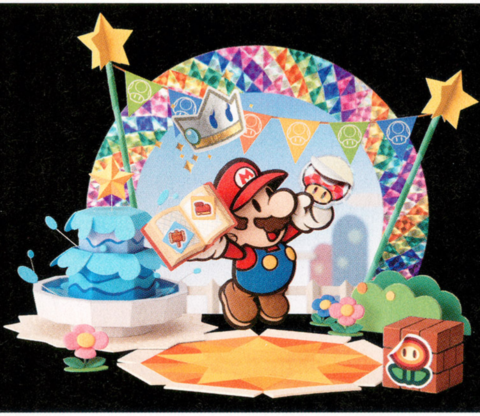
Stuck on You 60

Sure, Paper Mario: Sticker Star for Nintendo 3DS might be a fantastic RPG with gorgeous 3D graphics and cool sticker-based moves, but you know the best part? It contains no scratch-and-sniff stickers of Wario.

To Live and Die in London 64

How long will you last in the zombie apocalypse? Put your survival skills to the test on Wii U in the Mature-rated ZombiU.

RAYMAN LEGENDS 50



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PARKING
OVERGROUND

ZOMBIU 64

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
GB = GAME BOY
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
Wii U = Wii U

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THE LEGEND OF ZELDA™
Symphony of the Goddesses

"...a black tie, green tunic affair."
- Wired.com

"...a show that would appeal to every possible type of Zelda fan."
- Complex Magazine

"The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses is pure magic."
- Destructoid

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Pulse

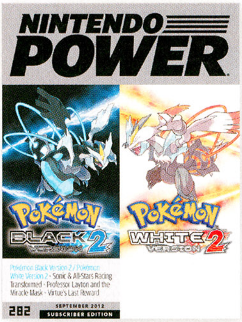
Letter from the Editor

Steve Thomason

Most kids want to be an astronaut or a professional athlete when they grow up. I wanted to write the letter from the editor in a video game magazine. Yeah, I was sort of a weird kid. But I enjoyed reading the magazines that covered my favorite hobby as much as I enjoyed playing the games themselves. Every Tuesday, I'd walk to the local grocery store, use my allowance to pick up the latest mag, and eagerly read it from cover to cover in one sitting. The letter from the editor always felt like it was officially welcoming me to this experience that I loved so much, and I imagined that being the person who wrote that had to be about the coolest thing in the world. Turns out I was right. That I'm getting the opportunity to do it means a lot to me, and I want to personally thank all of our loyal readers, the fantastic NP crew, and three men who mentored me along the way: Casey Loe, Scott Pelland, and Chris Slate.

Of course, the occasion is bittersweet coming off the announcement that Nintendo Power will cease publication at the end of the year. But I promise that we'll make the last few issues memorable and give the magazine a sendoff worthy of its amazing 24-year legacy. Nintendo Power is an institution, and all of us here consider it a tremendous honor to have been a part of it. Thanks for reading and for making this kid's dream come true.

STEVE THOMASON **EDITOR IN CHIEF**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SEPTEMBER 2012
SUBSCRIBER EDITION

V282 SEPTEMBER 2012

Got questions? Comments? Feedback on the issue? Well, this is The Hoff here to tell you that we've got answers! (The usefulness of those answers may vary.) And, of course, we've got another special letter request: what are your fondest Nintendo Power memories? Send your responses to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

There's No Place Like Home

What happened to Mario's house? The only times I can remember it are in Super Mario RPG when Mario had a pipe house, and in Super Mario Land 2 when he gets a mansion. What happened to the mansion? It was awesome when I beat SML2 and got the mansion, but then I never saw it again.

— NINJAKOOPA1009

Mario obviously had to downgrade his living accommodations between Super Mario Land 2 and Super Mario RPG. Unofficially, we think he probably sold the mansion so he could pay for the hospital bills that pop up every time he drops poor Yoshi in a pit.

Food for Thought

I've always wondered what the real purposes of Kirby's quests are. Mario and Link save princesses, Pit saves humanity, and Fox saves the Lylat system, but Kirby is usually just trying to get his food back. If he's that hungry, couldn't he go to a restaurant or a grocery store? Do they even have that kind of thing in Dream Land? **—#1NPFAN**

Sometimes a person—or, in this case, a roly-poly pink dude—just needs to stand up for the things he believes in. In Kirby's case, those things are usually edible. It's good to have firm beliefs.

Real Men Wear...

Why does Link wear tights and a skirt? Isn't he so epic that he could just wear whatever he wants?

—CYBERMORPH

For starters, it's a long tunic, not a skirt. And, yes, Link has pretty much earned the right to wear whatever he wants, and he's going with the green hat, tunic, and tights. So whatcha gonna do about it!?

Down on the Farm

I just came out of the closet. The I-admit-I'm-a-Harvest-Moon-fan closet, that is. Admitting this was hard for me, and it took many years to overcome the fear of being mocked because I play a farming game, since no one in my circle of friends plays Harvest Moon. In my opinion, it's a great, relaxing game that can be played by everyone, but I feel like it may be slowing down. It's not only my friends not playing HM that worries me—it's that it doesn't receive the attention/advertising that I feel it should get. I love HM and I think it's a great series for everyone to at least try once just to give it a chance.

—A NEW-FOUND HM FAN

We hope you caught our preview of Harvest Moon 3D: A New Beginning last issue! Though the series isn't necessarily for everybody, it offers a unique experience that's well worth trying out. Who knows? Maybe you'll discover a new favorite.

Yay! I was not particularly interested in Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed until I saw Vyse on the character roster! It's great to see him in another game (although a Skies of Arcadia 2 would be highly preferable).
—PICKLEDTAPIOCA

BY LAND, SEA, AND AIR

Sega's greatest heroes venture beyond the tarmac in Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed.

Kart-style racing games are indisputably more fun when they involve beloved characters driving through familiar locales. Case in point: 2010's Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing, which culled material from more than two decades of memorable Sega franchises. The company's first serious foray into the genre proved a hit with critics and audiences alike, leaving many longtime fans with just one question: what took so long? Fortunately, sequel Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed is on the fast track and heading to the Wii U system and Nintendo 3DS handheld this holiday season. We recently took the console version for a test drive and found it not only packed with even more classic Sega goodness than its predecessor, but also bolstered by a promising new gameplay hook.

ALL-STAR CAST

Passing Out

After many months of denial, rationalization, and internal conflict, I've come to accept that I'm a StreetPass-aholic. In its earlier stages it wasn't so bad, but now it's become an absolute obsession...from lurking around in supermarket aisles to taking frequent trips to the mall, I've become borderline maniacal in my quest to get that coveted green light! **—IAN S.**

The first step is admitting you have a problem. The second step is discussing it with other people... so you can StreetPass with them.

A Bit Puzzling

I was reading a couple newsletters from last year about the Super NES and Nintendo 64, and I started wondering, "Hey, if there are 16-bit home consoles and 64-bit consoles, are there 32-bit consoles?" **—KUBIAC10**

There are indeed, but Nintendo jumped from 16 bits straight to 64 bits as far as home consoles go. However, the Game Boy Advance utilized a 32-bit processor, as did the short-lived Virtual Boy.

Compelling Case

I was hoping the staff at NP could solve this debate I've been having with my girlfriend. She thinks NP magazine is a waste of space in the house, but I see it as a collector's item. I just need someone else to talk some sense to her. (I already know I'm right.) **—RYAN B.**

Dear Ryan's girlfriend: To be completely frank, Ryan's Nintendo Power collection is probably the most awesome thing in the house. If you're running out of space, get rid of something less important, like your bed or the fridge. TTYL.

Kingdom Hurts

I just finished reading your review of Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance and I am extremely disappointed in the score you gave it and what you said about it. When you stated that the storytelling is horrible and that it's too confusing, I was so frustrated. Tetsuya Nomura, the producer of the Kingdom Hearts series, said this was to be the most confusing installment to date! I don't think you should've given the game that score when the producer of the game said it was going to be hard to understand. **—ANDREW P.**

Just because the creators have acknowledged that the story is a confusing mess doesn't mean that it's a good thing! We just wish they had fixed it! Also, we consider an 8.0 to be a very good score, and highly recommend the game in spite of its flaws.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

While reading the article in Volume 281 on Scribblenauts Unlimited, I couldn't help but remember how The Hoff said in Pulse on page 6 that he was riding a plastic, flying, minty, bearded brontosaurus. However, the sidebar in the Scribblenauts Unlimited article on page 51 says that minty is one of the words added in the new game. Does this mean that The Hoff's power is so great that he can teleport himself into the future to play a game that isn't out yet?
—TREVOR MCFUR

The Hoff says: What? You thought I was talking about Scribblenauts Unlimited when I mentioned that? While it's true that I did get to play the game before it came out, I was actually talking about my real-life plastic, flying, minty, bearded brontosaurus. I keep it parked just outside the Nintendo Power offices, right next to Steve's rabid, flatulent, miniature aircraft carrier and Justin's delicious, dancing, mutant, mouselike kraken.

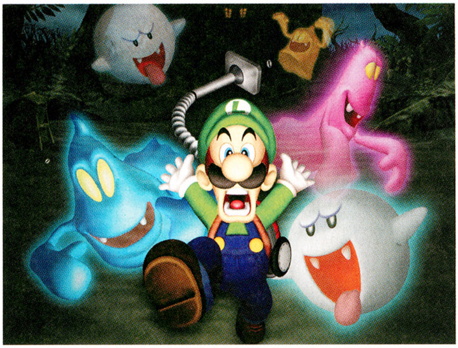
Putting the NES in Nester

Recently while digging through my old NES games, I found an NES Play Action Football cartridge that I didn't even know I had. I realized that this is the first game Nester ever appeared in. The reason I'm telling you this is because I was wondering if you guys might want to buy it from me, seeing as he used to be your mascot. Anyone interested? It's in perfect condition.
—NINTENDUDE1229

Um...tempting, but we'll pass. (Get it? Pass? 'Cause it's a football game and stuff?) Luckily, anyone who wants to see Nester in all his 8-bit glory can check out the game on the Wii system's Virtual Console service.

WASHINGTON WINS!
SAN FRANCISCO COULDN'T GET IT TOGETHER

Every amusement park has a haunted house of some kind. One fashioned after Luigi's Mansion would be perfect. Lighting effects would bring the ghosts to life throughout the whole place. —**COLLEEN**



What attractions would you want at a Nintendo theme park?

If there were a Nintendo theme park, I would love to see a lot of Legend of Zelda attractions, like a Spirit Tracks rollercoaster, or "Who can pull out the Master Sword?" (a Nintendo take on the Sword in the Stone from Disneyland). —**SKYWARDTOTHEMOON11**

There would have to be a Donkey Kong Country minecart rollercoaster. It's just too obvious! —**VAMPIRE-JEKYLL**

I would love to see a Duck Hunt shooting gallery. You could use a modified Zapper to shoot projectiles from various games (maybe mini Yoshi eggs, Deku Nuts, etc.) at duck cardboard cutouts. Of course, the dog runs the stand. If he laughs too much, you would be able to shoot him with a small Kirby plushie. Talking Navi cardboard cutouts would replace the ducks every Friday and Saturday. —**GOLDFISH**

It would be so incredibly legit if there was a Rainbow Road rollercoaster modeled after the infamous Mario Kart track. It would probably be the eighth wonder of the world. —**EBONY BLACKBURRUH**

What would be cooler in a Nintendo amusement park than a real-life Pokémon Snap? You could get special goggles that let you see virtual images of Pokémon in a bunch of different indoor and outdoor environments, and get the chance to snap a virtual picture or even catch them! —**POTATO**

I pick the obvious answer: Tingle Tower. It would have different carnival games inside, like Bombchu Bowling from Ocarina of Time, the claw game from Link's Awakening, Cucco-catching from The Minish Cap, the dreaded shoveling game from A Link to the Past, and [shudder] Fun Fun Island from Skyward Sword. When you pass a game, you could get a map, a Tingle doll, or a Rupee that could be cashed in for more prizes. —**BRETT A.**

While all the attractions would be awesome, you can't have an amusement park without food. The sound of health potions, Poffins, and spicy curry makes me hungry! Take my Rupees, Nintendo! —**STREETPASSWANTER**

I would love to see a Super Mario Bros. pipe maze. I mean, what would be more fun than jumping into the famous green pipes that lead you to more? Once you get to the end, you would jump on that ol' pole. Then you would celebrate by dancing an Italian dance. Oh, would that be sweet. —**VGMASTER**

If there was a Nintendo amusement park, they would have to make a ride based on the Sky Runner scene from EarthBound. It would be really fun to ride around over the park. Hopefully they wouldn't make it too faithful to the scene in the game, though; I don't want it to end with a crash landing! —**GIYGASHUNTER63**

I have three ideas for Nintendo theme-park attractions. A Super Mario Sunshine water ride, because I'm a sucker for water rides. A Bowser's Inside Story adventure house, because who wouldn't want to walk through Bowser's guts? And finally, a Samus kissing booth. Am I the only one who thinks she's still ridiculously hot with the Varia Suit on? —**LEWANUT**

PLEASE WRITE US

pulse@nintendopower.com

OR VIA CARRIER PIGEON AT

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San Bruno, CA 94066

TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR LETTER PUBLISHED:

Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER

THE WALKING DEAD

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THE ULTIMATE HANDHELD...

Nintendo
NINTENDO 3DS
3D
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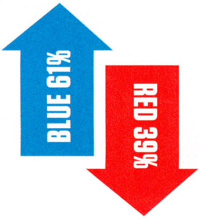
What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

WHAT COLOR NINTENDO 3DS XL DO YOU PREFER?



HOW ARE YOU PRIMARILY PLAYING NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2?

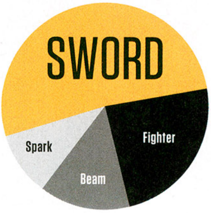
90%

SINGLE-PLAYER

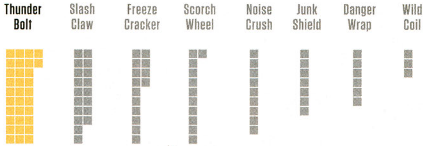
10%

MULTIPLAYER

WHICH OF THESE KIRBY POWERS IS YOUR FAVORITE?



WHAT IS THE COOLEST WEAPON FROM MEGA MAN 7?

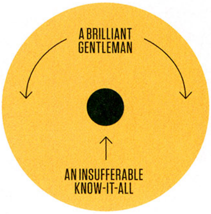


WHAT SERIES'S MUSIC WOULD BE BEST SUITED FOR A THEATRHYTHM GAME?

KINGDOM HEARTS

Kingdom Hearts 50% • Chrono Trigger 24%
Dragon Quest 22% • Mana series 4%

PROFESSOR LAYTON IS...



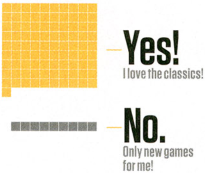
HAS A VIDEO GAME EVER MADE YOU SO EMOTIONAL THAT YOU CRIED?

YES 63%

BUT DON'T TELL ANYBODY.

NO 37%

DO YOU LIKE RETRO COLLECTIONS AND VIRTUAL CONSOLE GAMES?



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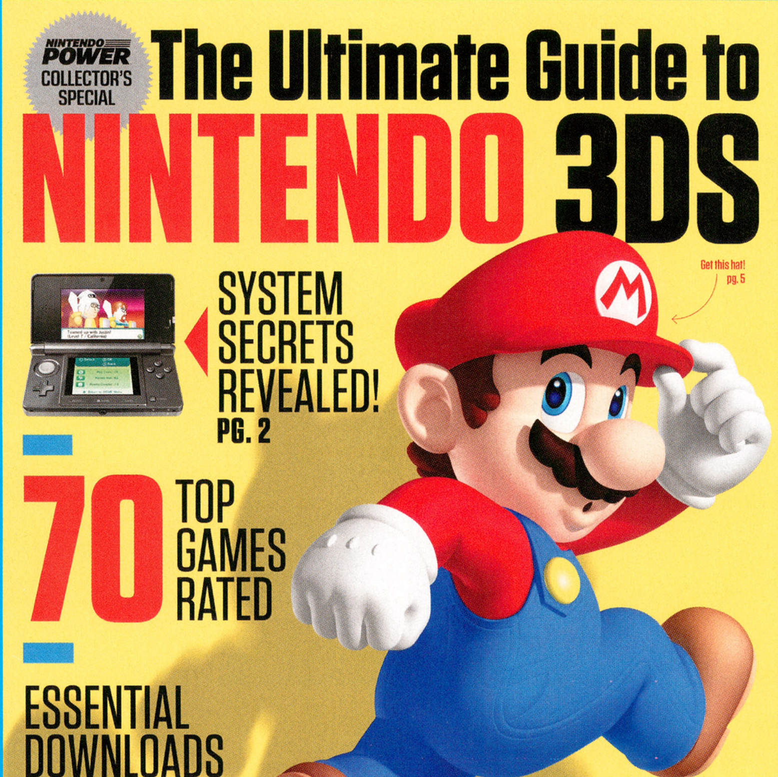
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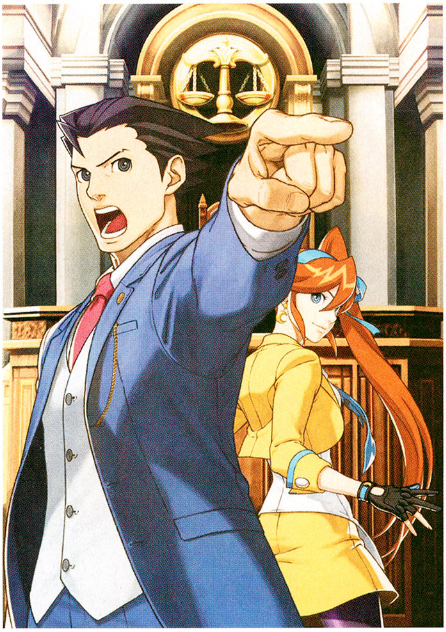
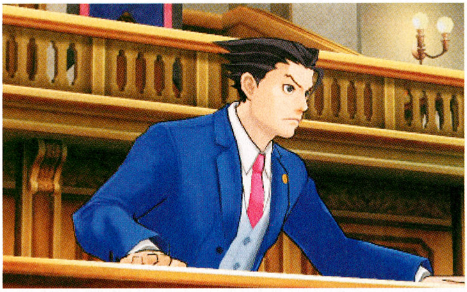
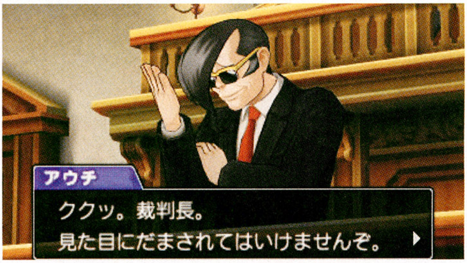


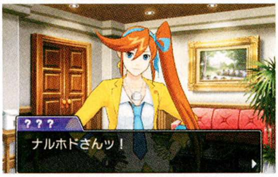




アウチ

ククッ。裁判長。
見た目にだまされてはいけませんぞ。

All screenshots depict the Japanese version of the game. Duh!



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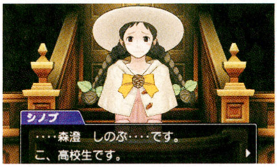


シノブ

……森澄　しのぶ……です。
こ、高校生です。

Phoenix Reborn

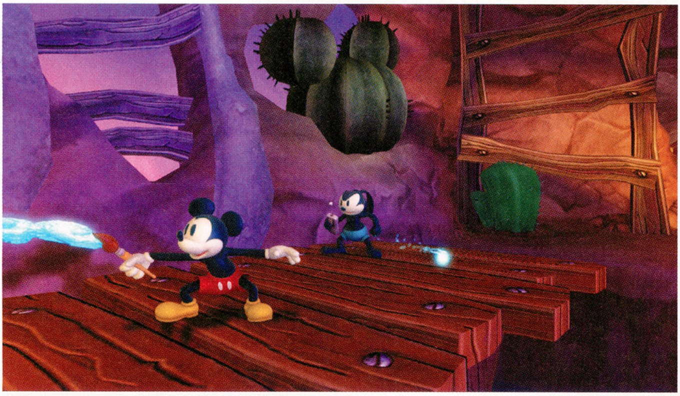
Everybody's favorite lawyer is back on Nintendo 3DS in the fifth Ace Attorney game.

BACK IN JANUARY Capcom quietly confirmed that the fifth mainline Ace Attorney title was in the works. Now the publisher has revealed several new details about the game, including the platform (the Nintendo 3DS handheld) and the main character—Phoenix Wright. That's correct; after being relegated to a supporting role in the fourth game in the series, Phoenix is back in the saddle for the fifth outing. Now 34 years old and sporting some spiffy new threads, the spiky-haired hero is once again ready to defend the innocent, expose the guilty, and win tough cases by the skin of his teeth. Although Phoenix has returned, players can expect the game to contain numerous new elements, such as polygonal visuals (to better take advantage of the system's stereoscopic 3D effects) and new characters, including a yellow-clad woman who acts as Phoenix's new assistant, and prosecutor Winston Payne's villainous brother. There will also be new gameplay elements involving Phoenix's ability to gauge witnesses' emotions. But where is Miles Edgeworth? Will Maya Fey, Apollo Justice, and Trucy Wright appear? Ace Attorney fans will have to wait to find out. Although Capcom representatives have stated that the game is coming to North America, no release date has been set as of press time. **—CHRIS H.**

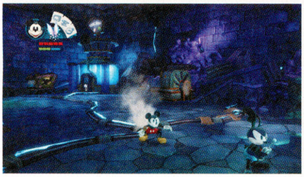
M-I-C-K-E-Y W-i-i U

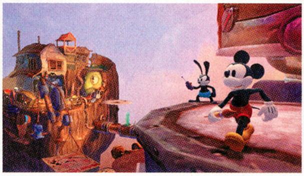
The upcoming Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two gets a high-def makeover.

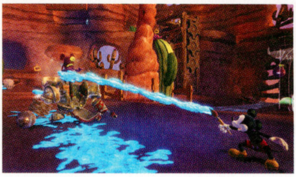
MOUSEKETEERS OF ALL ages will be delighted to hear that the previously announced Wii title Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two will also be coming to the Wii U console. In this sequel to Warren Spector and Disney Interactive/Junction Point's 2010 twisted take on the world of Disney, Mickey Mouse and Oswald the Lucky Rabbit return to the dark realm of Wasteland, a world of forgotten Disney characters and theme-park attractions. The game's new co-op play has Mickey controlling his magic paintbrush (which sprays paint and thinner) while Oswald wields an electricity-manipulating remote control. In addition to the adventure through the 3D Wasteland, the duo will also encounter puzzle-based 2D stages based on classic Disney cartoons. The Wii U version of the game features gorgeous HD visuals, and the Wii U GamePad controller allows a second player to view the action on its screen, eliminating the need for split-screen play. —**PHIL T.**



[Below] Behold the power of paint!



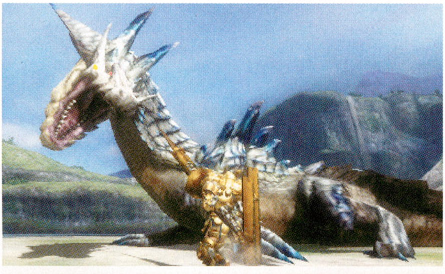




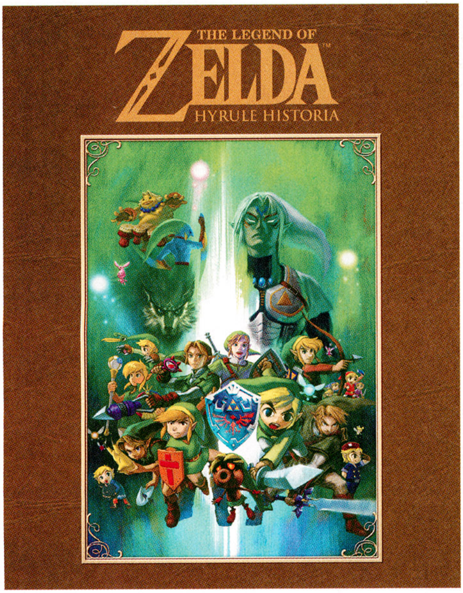
Tri, Tri Again!

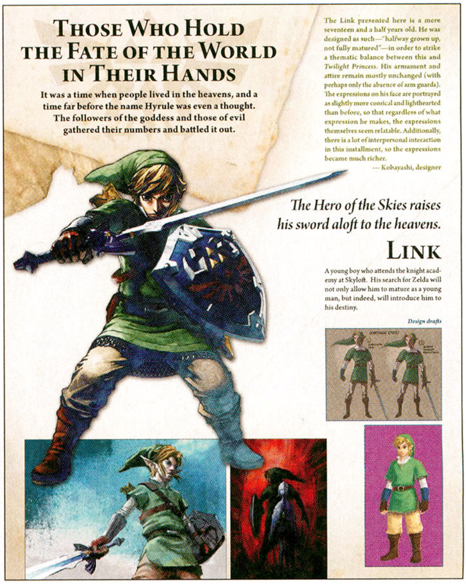
Capcom's Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate is coming to N3DS and Wii U.

GOOD NEWS, monster-slaying fans: Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate—an enhanced edition of Capcom's Monster Hunter Tri (originally released for Wii)—is coming to the Wii U console and the Nintendo 3DS handheld in March 2013. Armed with a huge array of customizable weapons and gear, up to four players can team up to track down and defeat massive dinosaurlike creatures, and the Wii U and N3DS versions will allow for cross-platform cooperative play. In addition, both versions will take advantage of touch-screen functionality to quickly access weapons, books, minigames, and more, and you'll even be able to interchange save data between the two versions so you can maintain your progress whether at home or on the go. —**CHRIS H.**



The screens shown here are from the Nintendo 3DS version of Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate. Expect the Wii U version to look even better.





THOSE WHO HOLD THE FATE OF THE WORLD IN THEIR HANDS

It was a time when people lived in the heavens, and a time far before the name Hyrule was even a thought. The followers of the goddess and those of evil gathered their numbers and battled it out.

The Link presented here is a mere seventeen and a half years old. He was designed as such—"halfway grown up, not fully matured"—in order to strike a thematic balance between this and *Twilight Princess*. His armament and attire remain mostly unchanged (with perhaps only the absence of arm guards). The expressions on his face are portrayed as slightly more comical and lighthearted than before, so that regardless of what expression he makes, the expressions themselves seem relatable. Additionally, there is a lot of interpersonal interaction in this installment, so the expressions became much richer.

— Kobayashi, designer

The Hero of the Skies raises his sword aloft to the heavens.

LINK

A young boy who attends the knight academy at Skyloft. His search for Zelda will not only allow him to mature as a young man, but indeed, will introduce him to his destiny.

Design drafts

Historia Lesson

Take a peek into one of gaming's greatest series with *The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia*.

WANT TO KNOW everything there is to know about the Legend of Zelda series? Then look no further than *The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia*, published by Dark Horse Books. Originally released in Japan last year to help commemorate the series's 25th anniversary, this 274-page hardbound volume presents all the content of its overseas counterpart, now translated into English, along with a new cover and a larger page size. Fans can expect a wealth of illustrations and concept art from every title in the Zelda series, as well as behind-the-scenes design information, historical series data, and an official chronology of the games.

"There is something for every fan of The Legend of Zelda in this book," asserts Patrick Thorpe, editor at Dark Horse. "Fans who have been playing the series since the initial release are going to love the historical aspect of the book and the text pieces by [Zelda creator] Shigeru Miyamoto and [series producer] Eiji Aonuma. Newer fans are going to be excited about the large Skyward Sword section and the manga by Akira Himekawa, which contains some really important continuity that impacts the entire series. Personally, I love the character designs. There is so much gorgeous stuff in here, you really can't go wrong. I know that fans are really curious about the game timeline as well. It's in here!"

Thorpe attributes the book's impending North American release directly to the Zelda series's ardent fan base. "When *Hyrule Historia* came out in Japan, the fans came out in force to let it be known that they wanted an English-language edition of the book," he confirms. "I have no doubt that was instrumental to getting the book over here. I saw wave after wave of online petitions for it! When the book was announced, the fans could not have been more supportive.... I just want to let all of the Zelda fans know that every person here at Dark Horse working on the book is also a huge fan of Nintendo and the Legend of Zelda franchise. We are working as hard as we can to deliver the best book possible. It's an honor and a pleasure to be a small link (forgive my pun) in the chain of one of the greatest video game series of all time!"

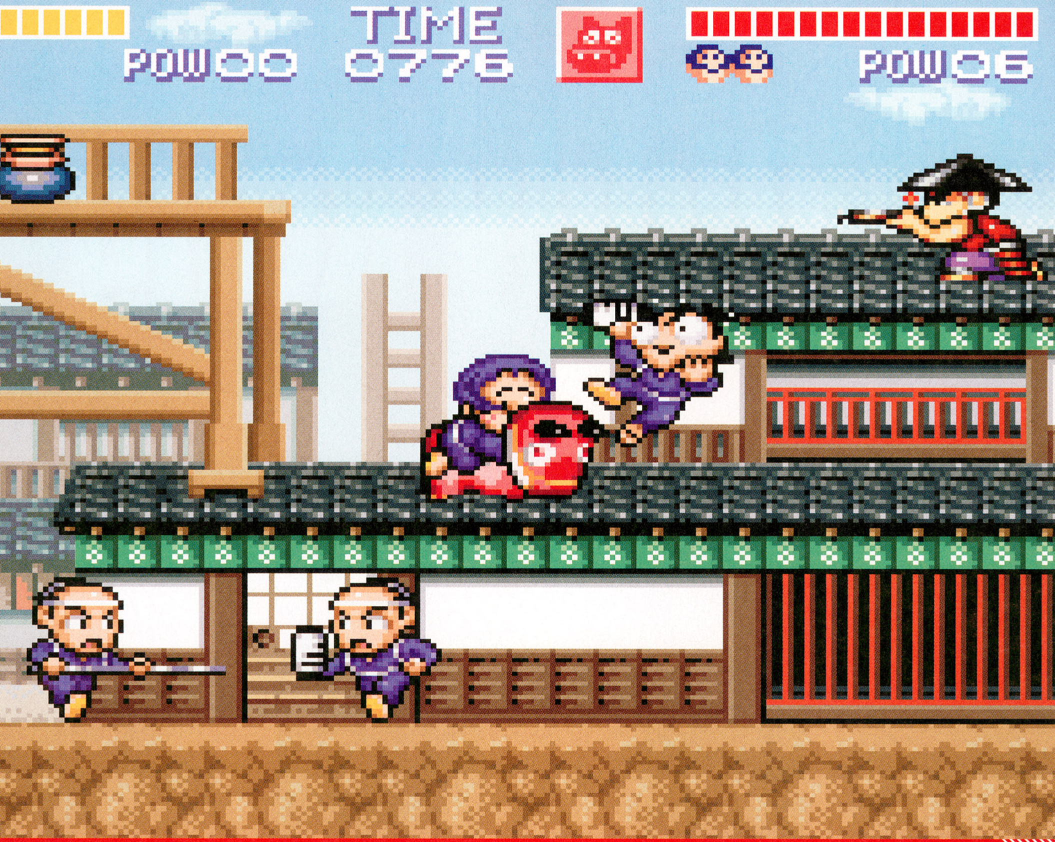
The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia should be available online and in bookstores this coming January at a suggested price of $34.99. —**CHRIS H.**

A WINNER IS...

North American monster hunters and ace attorneys.

DODONGO DISLIKES...

That all good things must come to an end.



THAT WAS AWESOME!

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME MOMENTS

BESSY THE HEARTLESS HOLSTEIN

THE LEGEND OF THE MYSTICAL NINJA, SUPER NES, 1992

"The Legend of the Mystical Ninja was full of really bizarre and awesome things. The best? Probably the ability to summon a 'terminator cow' that you could ride to trample enemies." —**CHRIS H.**

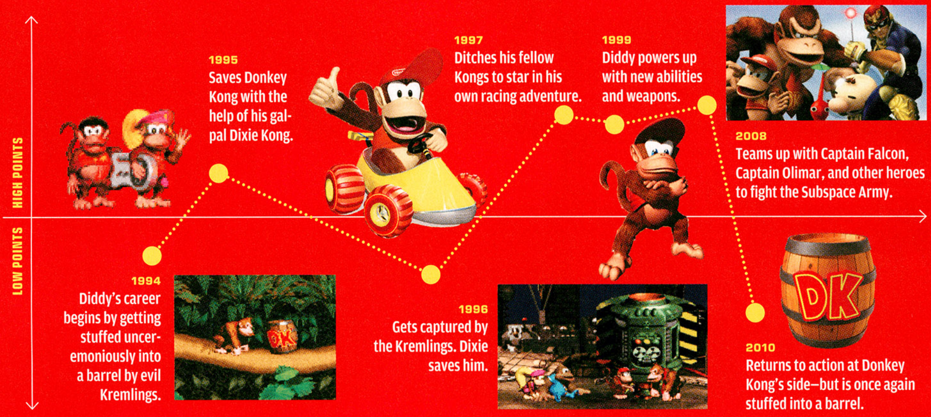
STAR POWER
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
SUPER NES, 1994

Diddy Kong

Donkey Kong's little buddy is more than just second banana.

CAREER GRAPH



1994
Diddy's career begins by getting stuffed unceremoniously into a barrel by evil Kremlings.

1995
Saves Donkey Kong with the help of his gal-pal Dixie Kong.

1996
Gets captured by the Kremlings. Dixie saves him.

1997
Ditches his fellow Kongs to star in his own racing adventure.

1999
Diddy powers up with new abilities and weapons.

2008
Teams up with Captain Falcon, Captain Olimar, and other heroes to fight the Subspace Army.

2010
Returns to action at Donkey Kong's side—but is once again stuffed into a barrel.

OUR FAVORITE DIDDY KONG GAMES

Donkey Kong Country
SUPER NES, 1994
After being on hiatus for many years, Donkey Kong made his long-awaited return in Donkey Kong Country, and he brought his debuting pal Diddy Kong along for the ride. The pattern-based platforming was excellent, and the visuals were amazing back in the day.

Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
SUPER NES, 1995
With Donkey Kong ape-napped by the evil Kremlings, Diddy Kong jumped into the spotlight in the sequel to DKC. Teaming up with his friend Dixie Kong, Diddy embarked on an adventure that was more varied and challenging than its predecessor.

Super Smash Bros. Brawl
Wii, 2008
Boasting refined four-player fighting, a massive story mode, and an unprecedented lineup of all-star characters, Super Smash Bros. Brawl just might be the best installment of the popular series. Diddy Kong is one of the game's new challengers; he soars into the air with his Rocketbarrels and blasts adversaries with his peanut popguns.

Donkey Kong Country Returns
Wii, 2010
The latest DKC game is a fine return to form for the beloved series. Familiar gameplay and story elements combine with fresh play mechanics and a revamped visual style to deliver a must-have platformer. Diddy is playable only in co-op mode, but he certainly lends a hand in single-player action; his Barrel Jet backpack is a lifesaver.

"OK, that's just weird. But also delicious!"

DK JUNGLE CLIMBER
NINTENDO DS, 2007

Diddy doesn't wear pants, but he never leaves the jungle without his hat! It sports the Nintendo logo.

Diddy's superuseful Barrel Jet backpack enables him to hover over treacherous terrain. He sometimes wears the similar Rocketbarrel backpack, which he uses to soar to new heights.

He's empty-handed here, but Diddy can often be seen wielding twin peanut popguns or strumming his star-shaped guitar. Diddy's dexterity also makes him a great climber.

Put bananas here.

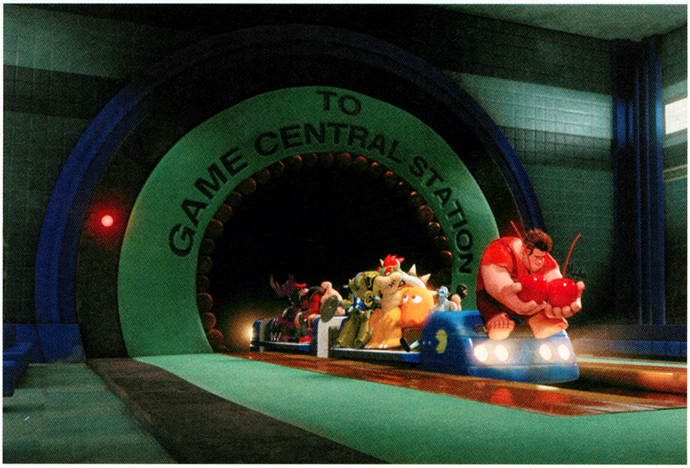
Look out! Diddy's mighty cartwheels force his foes to suck Kong toes.

Diddy has been known to coil up his tail and use it to bounce into the air via his Simian Spring maneuver. He can use the appendage as an offensive weapon, too.

THAT FUNKY MONKEY

As with all the playable characters in Donkey Kong 64, Diddy Kong had a verse devoted to him in the game's infamous "DK Rap" opening theme song. Here's what the lyricist had to say about Diddy.

He's back again and about time too,
And this time he's in the mood.
He can fly real high with his jetpack on.
With his pistols out, he's one tough Kong!
He'll make you smile when he plays his tune,
But Kremlings beware, 'cause he's after you!



Wreck-less Behavior

The creators of Wreck-It Ralph unlock the secrets behind the upcoming movie.

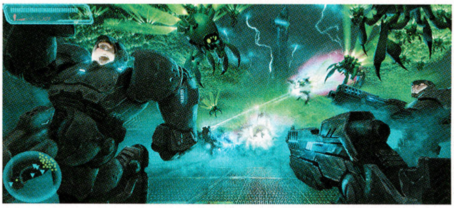
LAST ISSUE, we were introduced to *Wreck-It Ralph*, the upcoming movie from Walt Disney Animation Studios. In it, Ralph (voiced by John C. Reilly) is the star of a fictional '80s arcade game. Tired of playing the foil to the game's star, Fix-It Felix Jr. (Jack McBrayer), Ralph abandons his game on a quest to become a hero. His journey leads him into a sci-fi first-person shooter where he meets Sergeant Calhoun (Jane Lynch), and a cartoonish kart racer where he befriends the troublesome Vanellope von Schweetz (Sarah Silverman).

We recently talked with *Wreck-It Ralph* director Rich Moore and producer Clark Spencer. Moore was quick to point that he was qualified to direct *Wreck-It Ralph* based on his love of video games: "I'm a geek...I was part of that generation that was the first to have games in our life." He then spent the rest of our interview reminiscing about his favorite games, including classics like Centipede, Marble Madness, Q*Bert, Sinistar, and Dragon's Lair. Gaming is still one of Moore's favorite hobbies; with just a hint of guilt in his voice, he confesses, "I'm working during the day on a movie about video games, and now I'm going home and playing games for five hours."

In *Wreck-It Ralph*, audiences see three different game worlds—the 8-bit Fix-It Felix, the FPS Hero's Duty, and the kart racer Sugar Rush. For a time, Spencer reveals, Ralph was going to visit another game. Extreme Easy Living 2 would have been "Sims meets Grand Theft Auto done Disney-style." The scene was cut because the filmmakers felt that four different worlds would distract audiences from the story.

Ralph's creators were also concerned about moviegoers becoming distracted by too many classic game characters—including Bowser and Sonic—making cameo appearances. To fight their urge to focus too much on those cameos at the expense of Ralph's journey, the crew cut out all of them, then perfected the story, and reworked the licensed characters back into the film in ways that supported the narrative.

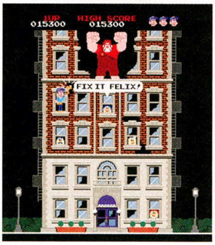
When confronted with the big question—whether Wreck-It Ralph or Donkey Kong would win a fight between the two—however, Spencer is noncommittal. He replies, "Wow, that's a tough one. Ralph has pretty big fists, but DK has the raw gorilla power." Although we doubt that it was a true peek at things to come, Spencer did get our imaginations working when he said, "It would be interesting to see. Maybe in a short...." As excited as we are about that possibility, we're just hyped to see *Wreck-It Ralph* when it hits theaters on November 2. **—PHIL T.**



FIX-IT FELIX FEVER

Movie studios spare no expense to advertise their upcoming releases. Disney has come up with a very unique way to bring people into the world of *Wreck-It Ralph*—a fully playable arcade game.

This isn't a typical licensed movie game, however. It's a full-fledged re-creation of the Fix-It Felix Jr. game seen in the movie, complete with early-'80s graphics and sound effects. The game has the player controlling Felix, who is tasked with repairing the Niceland apartment building that is being wrecked by Ralph. Felix moves from window to window, and a quick tap of the Fix button mends any broken glass. Meanwhile, Ralph roams the top of the screen, pounding his fists and causing deadly bricks to fall. As the levels progress, barriers appear to block Felix's path, obstacles must be jumped, and flying birds must be dodged. Like most early arcade games, there is no true ending to Fix-It Felix Jr.—players simply try to earn the high score.



Not only is this arcade game a fairly accurate and enjoyable riff on the classic coin-op days, but the cabinets in which the game is housed lend to the retro feel. The cabinet artwork is highly reminiscent of Nintendo's Donkey Kong arcade game, and the machines have been weathered to make them look as though they've been sitting in bowling alleys since 1983. The Fix-It Felix arcade games have already made appearances at conventions and other special events, and they should be showing up in movie theaters later this year.

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POWER QUIZ

EASY

What kind of vehicle does Link drive in The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks?

AVERAGE

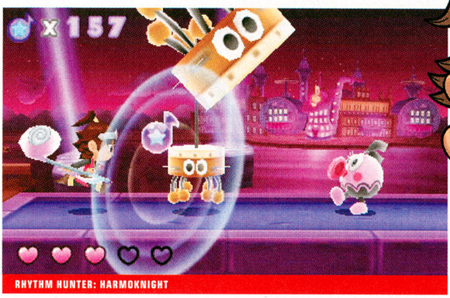
In what game does Mario pilot the Marine Pop submarine?

HARDCORE

In the original Mega Man series, which two robot masters can transform into vehicles?

ANSWERS

EASY: A train; AVERAGE: Super Mario Land; HARDCORE: Turbo Man and Nitro Man



RHYTHM HUNTER: HARMOKNIGHT

Something for Everyone

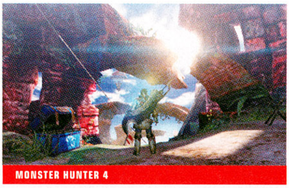
NEWS *from* JAPAN

Japan's late-August Nintendo Direct presentation detailed a diverse release slate for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

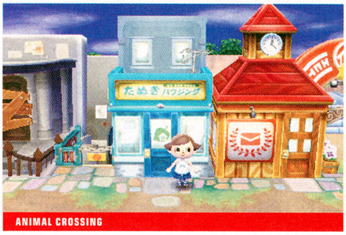
WITH ALL EYES on the upcoming Wii U console, Nintendo of Japan held a meaty Nintendo Direct presentation to try to divert some attention back to the Nintendo 3DS lineup. Strikingly, the presentation debuted new versions of nearly all of the breakthrough casual games that made the Nintendo DS such a hit with mainstream consumers. It will be interesting to see if brands like Brain Age, Style Savvy, Friend Collection, and Art Academy can bring the same alternative audiences to N3DS that they did to its predecessor.

Fortunately, these titles don't seem to be coming at the expense of traditional games. The most pleasant surprise of the program may have been the debut of **Rhythm Hunter: HarmoKnight**, a new action/rhythm title by Pokémon developer Game Freak. In this fast-paced title, players must jump and attack foes in tune to the game's music to clear 50 stages comprising eight worlds. That's a nice chunk of content for an eShop game that costs only around $20. Nintendo also showed off more of the new **Animal Crossing** game for N3DS. This installment is looking like a control freak's dream, with deep customization features that even allow players to redesign furniture and create their own fabric patterns for clothing. On a macro level, players can impose ordinances on their towns, such as requiring stores to stay open late or flowers to grow in place of weeds.

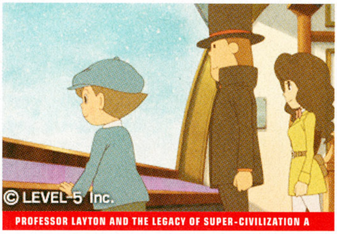
There were plenty of big third-party games on display, too. Level-5 CEO Akihiro Hino announced a new chapter in his company's flagship series: **Professor Layton and the Legacy of Super-Civilization A**. This will be last game to feature Layton in the lead role, but Hino promised Layton's sendoff would be a world-spanning adventure on a scale never before seen in the series. Finally, Capcom announced that the hotly anticipated **Monster Hunter 4** would be playable at this year's Tokyo Game Show, and unveiled a new weapon that's scheduled to debut in that installment: a staff that summons energy-draining insects. Bet you didn't see that one coming! —**CASEY L.**



MONSTER HUNTER 4



ANIMAL CROSSING

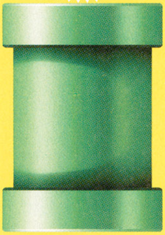


PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE LEGACY OF SUPER-CIVILIZATION A

WARP ZONE

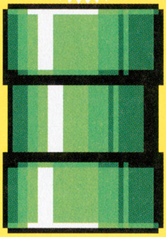
What we were writing about way back when

5 YEARS AGO

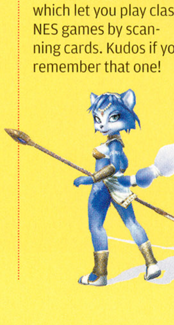


Games rarely get better than Super Mario Galaxy for the Wii console. In the October 2007 issue of Nintendo Power we had the chance to venture deep into Mario's interstellar adventure for the first time and experience the thrills of visiting various planets, running around spherical worlds, and feeling the magnificent effects of gravity. Even after five years, Super Mario Galaxy is one of the best games on the system. Speaking of fantastic Wii games, the issue contained a review of Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, as well, which scored a perfect 10.

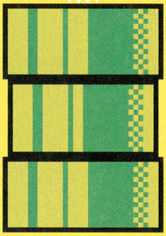
10 YEARS AGO



Who's the foxy lady? Why, it's Krystal, Fox McCloud's disturbingly popular costar in Star Fox Adventures for GameCube. Originally planned for Nintendo 64, the long-awaited Legend of Zelda-esque game finally landed in late 2002, grabbing a substantial feature in Nintendo Power Vol. 161. Also included in that issue were tips on Super Mario Sunshine and Animal Crossing, and an article on the short-lived e-Reader accessory for Game Boy Advance, which let you play classic NES games by scanning cards. Kudos if you remember that one!



20 YEARS AGO



NINTENDO POWER
SUPER NES BART'S NIGHTMARE
SUPER MARIO KART
Fun In The Fast Lane
THE SOURCE FOR NEWS AND STRATEGIES STRAIGHT FROM THE PROS

Clear the roads! The genre-defining original Super Mario Kart adorned the cover of Nintendo Power Vol. 41, and as Mario and his fellow competitors proved in a nine-page feature article, they weren't gonna slow down for anybody. In fact, they've pretty much been driving at full speed ever since. The issue also featured the Game Boy version of Bionic Commando, unique Super NES adventure Out of This World, and the visually impressive but disappointing The Simpsons: Bart's Nightmare.

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
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COLLECTOR'S CORNER

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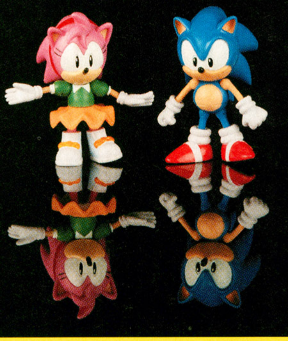
Snake! Snake!? SNAKE!?

Collectibles don't come any tougher than this Play Arts Kai action figure of supersoldier Soild Snake (as he appeared in Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes for GameCube). Standing more than 10" tall, the highly articulated figure includes multiple weapons and alternate hands. The suggested price is $60.

Classic Couple

Sonic and Amy, sittin' in a tree... OK, maybe not, but Blue Blur fans still won't want to miss out on Jazware's Sonic the Hedgehog comic-book two-pack, which includes classic Sonic, classic Amy (sporting her original Sonic CD attire), and a copy of Archie Comics's *Sonic the Hedgehog* #226.



Koopa Shells Not Included

Kart-racing fans, start your motors! Manufactured by Goldie International, these Mario Kart Wii Mini Radio Control Karts will let you zip to the finish line or race around the room using the included wireless remotes. Two versions—Mario and Yoshi—are available.

MARIO
YOSHIKART

PHOTOS BY BARAK SHRAMA

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GAME FORECAST

READERS' MOST WANTED

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NINTENDO 3DS

1. Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon
2. Paper Mario: Sticker Star
3. Animal Crossing*
4. Fire Emblem*
5. Scribblenauts Unlimited

Wii

1. Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
2. LEGO The Lord of the Rings
3. Skylanders Giants
4. Wreck-It Ralph
5. Just Dance 4

Wii U

1. New Super Mario Bros. U
2. Pikmin 3
3. Nintendo Land
4. Scribblenauts Unlimited
5. Game & Wario

NINTENDO 3DS

50 Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
Ace Attorney 5*	Capcom	TBA
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	11/12
Angler's Club: Ultimate Bass Fishing 3D	D3	2012
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	2013
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	11/12
Boulder Dash-XL 3D	Giant	TBA
Bratz: Fashion Boutique	Activision	10/12
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate	Konami	Q1 13
Classic Games Overload: Card and Puzzle Edition	Telegames	11/12
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion	Disney	11/12
Etrian Odyssey IV	Atlus	TBA
Fire Emblem*	Nintendo	2013
Freakyforms Deluxe: Your Creations, Alive!	Nintendo	11/12
Harvest Moon 3D: A New Beginning	Natsume	10/12
Hello Kitty Picnic	Majesco	10/12
Imagine Babyz	Ubisoft	10/12
Imagine Fashion Life	Ubisoft	10/12
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	11/12
Junior Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
Lalaloopsy: Carnival of Friends	Activision	10/12
LEGO City: Undercover*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	10/12
Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon	Nintendo	Q1 13
Mahjong 3D: Warriors of the Emperor	Giant	TBA
Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate	Capcom	3/13
Moshi Monsters Moshlings Theme Park	Activision	10/12
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Old Skool Classics	Storm City	10/12
Paper Mario: Sticker Star	Nintendo	11/12
Petz Countryside	Ubisoft	11/12
Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask	Nintendo	10/12
Rabbids Rumble	Ubisoft	11/12
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	10/12
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	11/12
Style Savvy: Trendsetters	Nintendo	10/12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
The Trash Pack	Activision	10/12
Word Wizard 3D	Storm City	10/12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	10/12
Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward	Aksys	10/12

Wii

Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	11/12
Big Time Rush	GameMill	11/12
Cabela's Hunting Expeditions	Activision	10/12
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	11/12
Just Dance: Disney Party	Ubisoft	10/12
Karaoke Joysound	Konami	2012
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	10/12
Monster High Skultimate Roller Maze	Little Orbit	11/12
Nickelodeon Dance 2	2K Play	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	10/12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	11/12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	10/12
WWE '13	THQ	10/12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Assassin's Creed III	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Batman: Arkham City—Armored Edition	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	HOL 12
Call of Duty: Black Ops II	Activision	HOL 12
Darksiders II	THQ	HOL 12
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	HOL 12
Family Party: 30 Great Games Obstacle Arcade	D3	HOL 12
FIFA Soccer 13	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
Game & Wario*	Nintendo	TBA
Injustice: Gods Among Us	Warner Bros.	TBA
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	HOL 12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	HOL 12
LEGO City: Undercover	Nintendo	HOL 12
Madden NFL 13	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
Marvel's Avengers: Battle for Earth	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Mass Effect 3	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate	Capcom	3/13
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	HOL 12
New Super Mario Bros. U	Nintendo	HOL 12
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	Nintendo	HOL 12
Nintendo Land	Nintendo	HOL 12
Pikmin 3	Nintendo	TBA
Project P-100*	Nintendo	TBA
Rabbids Land	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Rayman Legends	Ubisoft	TBA
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	HOL 12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
SiNG*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	TBA
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	HOL 12
Sports Connection	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tank! Tank! Tank!	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Tekken Tag Tournament 2*	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Wii Fit U	Nintendo	TBA
Wii U Panorama View*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013	Ubisoft	HOL 12
ZombiU	Ubisoft	HOL 12

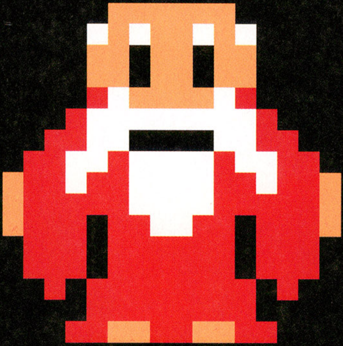
NINTENDO DS

Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	11/12
Big Time Rush	GameMill	11/12
Bratz: Fashion Boutique	Activision	10/12
Lalaloopsy: Carnival of Friends	Activision	10/12
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	10/12
Monster High Skultimate Roller Maze	Little Orbit	11/12
Moshi Monsters Moshlings Theme Park	Activision	10/12
Nickelodeon Bubble Guppies	2K Play	11/12
Nickelodeon Dora & Team Umizoomi: Fantastic Flight	2K Play	11/12
Puzzle Overload	Telegames	10/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
ThunderCats	Namco Bandai	10/12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
The Trash Pack	Activision	10/12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	11/12
Winx Club: Magical Fairy Party	D3	11/12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	10/12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE. ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

"IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS."

—OLD MAN, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA, 1987



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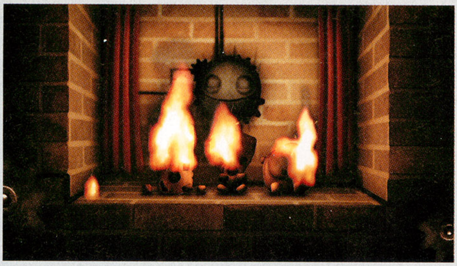
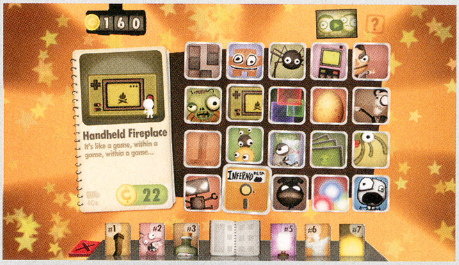
ESCAPE THE VIRUS: SHOOT-'EM-UP
THE LOST TOWN—THE JUNGLE

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
METAL SLUG X
REAL BOUT FATAL FURY SPECIAL

Burn, Baby, Burn!

Kids, don't try this at home! Little Inferno for Wii U promises to bring out the arsonist in all of us.

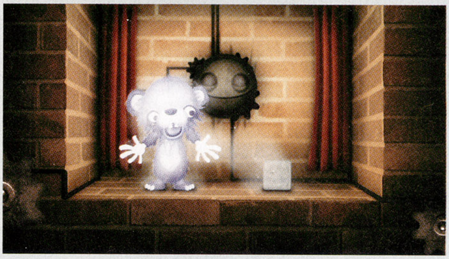


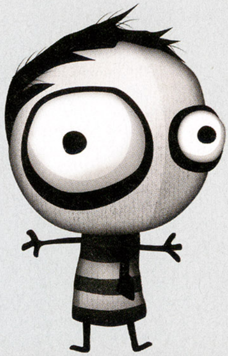


IT'S ONE OF of the first lessons that we're taught as children—don't play with fire. How amusing it is, then, that there is now a video game in which players are encouraged to do nothing but. Little Inferno is the brainchild of Tomorrow Corporation—an indie development studio composed of some of the minds behind the WiiWare hit World of Goo and Nintendo DS gem Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure—and it's coming soon to the Wii U console as a downloadable title.

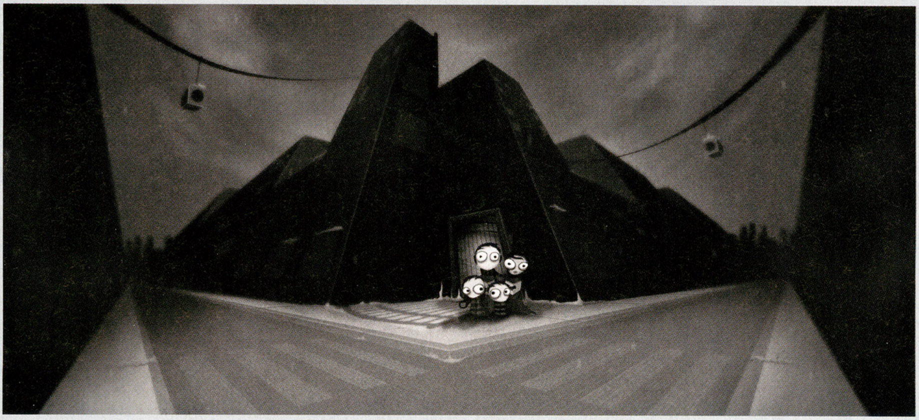
When we say that you play with fire in Little Inferno, that's about as accurate of a gameplay description as you can get. As the game begins, you're staring into a Little Inferno Entertainment Fireplace, where the bulk of the action takes place. It is here that you will be satiating your pyromaniacal tendencies. Pointing the Wii Remote at the screen allows you to generate a small flame wherever you wish. Of course, there is little to burn in an empty fireplace, so you'll need to find some fuel for the flame. Since there's no log-gathering minigame, there's just one option—torch all of your worldly possessions.

Luckily, there are plenty of flammable items to be found in the game's mail-order catalogs. Just flip open these books and drop a few coins to have a new piece of tinder delivered to your door. The objects generate coins as you burn them, giving you the resources to order additional goodies. The more stuff you buy, the more catalogs are unlocked, and the process begins anew.



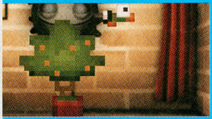


It all sounds a bit mindless, doesn't it? The simple premise, however, conceals a deeper subtext. As you play, a story begins to reveal itself through letters received from such characters as your neighbor, a hyperactive little girl named Sugar Plumbs whose messages slowly go from goofy to introspective and somewhat creepy. Additionally, the appropriately named Weather Man provides updates on the current climate, which is the catalyst for the entire game. In the world of Little Inferno, it has become increasingly cold. Snow falls endlessly from the sky, and it has grown more and more difficult to stay warm. This has led to the trend of burning anything and everything that will take to fire. In fact, the most popular child's toy is currently the aforementioned Little Inferno Entertainment Fireplace. It's a weird, slightly dark story, and it only gets weirder and darker as you

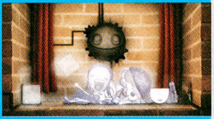


SOMETHING'S COOKING

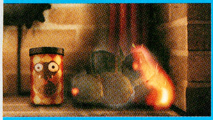
There are some pretty bizarre items that you can toss in your inferno, and they don't always react the way you expect. Here are some of the interesting combustibles.



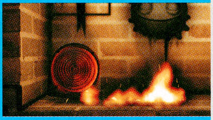
GAME BUSH
This pixelated plant brings back fond memories of the 8-bit days. Even more so when it starts spitting out ducks. Blast those birds!



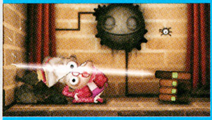
DRY ICE CUBES
Ice may melt quickly when placed in a fire, but this super-cooling dry ice freezes any other items with which it comes in contact.



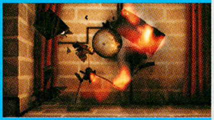
SNAKE SURPRISE
One of the many hazardous items from the Totally Recalled Toys catalog, this can explodes not with snakes, but rather with hypodermic needles.



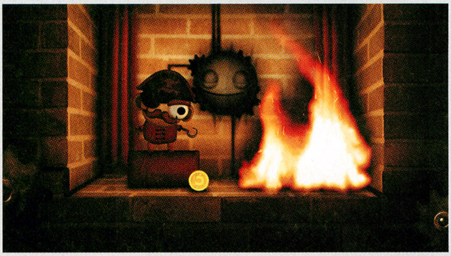
SPACE HEATER
Just in case you need a little extra warmth in your hearth. Watch the flames dance around when you move the heater past them.

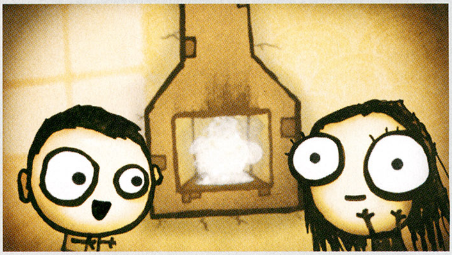


LASER POINTER
You won't want to burn this handy item right away. It's too much fun to drag it around and watch it slice the other objects into smaller pieces.



MINI MOON
This tiny planetoid has its own gravitational pull, so anything that's sitting in your fireplace will be drawn to it instantly. Science at work!





progress.

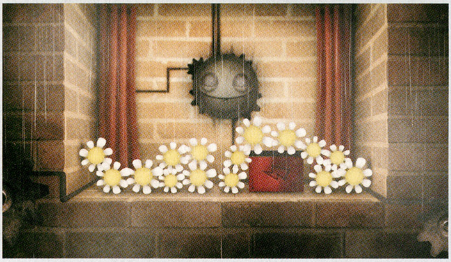
It's worth noting that most of the items don't simply burn—the fire affects many of the objects in unusual ways. A toy oil tanker, for example, will catch fire quickly and begin to spout flames as it heats up. A seed packet will explode, sending its contents flying around the fireplace. The seeds quickly sprout into flowers, which will also begin to burn. When the oddly adorable Kitty Kitty Poo Poo Plushie burns, it becomes so startled that it fills the fireplace with...well, with what you might expect. Don't worry, though: tossing a small nuclear device in the fire will clear everything out in a hurry.

In a very "oh, the developers are going to get in trouble for this" twist, you can pick up the burning objects and toss them around the screen. Some of them are quite fragile, so if they're flung with enough force, you'll end up with flaming shrapnel all over the screen. Messing around with the object physics adds an entertaining dimension to the game. It's fun seeing how items react when interacted with. You may not have to build a little house out of those wooden blocks before igniting them, but it sure is more satisfying to watch them burn that way. Kyle Gabler, one of Little Inferno's creators, says that the intention is to allow the player to explore without leaving the fireplace setting.

Exploration comes into play with Little Inferno's secondary goal: forming combos. Dozens of clues hint at random items that can be placed in the fireplace together and burned for extra cash and for stamps (which help speed delivery of your mail orders). It's not terribly difficult to find effective combinations at the start of the game, when there's only one catalog of goods available to choose from, but it gets far trickier when more options open up.

Little Inferno is as much an electronic play set as it is a video game. Gabler wants it to replicate the feeling of wonder that one got in the old days when discovering a new secret in a video game, and the experimental nature of Little Inferno's gameplay really lends itself to that. Factor in an aesthetic that ranges from cute to disturbing (why are those dolls screaming as they burn?), and you end up with one of the most intriguing titles coming to Wii U. If all goes according to plan, it will be available upon the system's launch, so you can look forward to getting your flame on soon. —**PHIL T.**

TOMORROW CORPORATION



Burning Men

When discussing a game as unique as Little Inferno, it's always good to have a little inside perspective. That's why we went straight to the source to speak with the lads at Tomorrow Corporation—Kyle Gabler, Kyle Gray, Allan Blomquist, and their fictional public relations representative. They've answered all of our (ahem) burning questions about their upcoming title.

NINTENDO POWER Little Inferno's premise is certainly unique. Where did the idea come from? Is there something that you're hoping to say with the story?

KYLE GABLER The movie *Psycho* famously makes you think it's going to be about a nice little lady and her nice little robbery, until the plot stabs you in the chest and becomes a slasher. The silent movie *Sunrise* makes you think it's going to be a murder conspiracy, but then it ends up being a really sweet story about falling back in love.

We were curious if we could do something like that with a game. You can play with your nice warm fire for hours and days! But something else is burning....

What do you think is the appeal of burning things?

KYLE GRAY Burning things has a primitive, cavemanlike appeal, just like shopping! Now, with Little Inferno, you can do both at the same time.

There isn't much in the way of instruction for the player in Little Inferno. What challenges are there in urging the player to keep moving forward?

GABLER I miss the good old days when you switched on a game, and you were ready to go. There were no big prerendered cinematics, there were no patronizing tutorials to click through, there were no images of a game controller with a spider web of arrows and instructions pointing to each button. They thrust you into a game and trusted that you were smart enough and curious enough to figure it out on your own.

I felt like an explorer playing games 20 years ago. What happens if I get all the seashells in Link's Awakening? Why am I trading a can of dog food for other things? What is the nature of the island? In Space Quest IV, I find myself in a deserted city with a little marching robot rabbit, and no instructions.

There was a whole world in those old games! They followed their own logic; they were confident with their idiosyncrasies, and never felt they had to explain themselves. And that's been one of our design goals: The player is smart and curious, and our game should respect them by *not* explaining everything. It's up to the player to explore a world that has been there long before they ever showed up, and will still be there after they leave.

What influenced the game's visual style?

GRAY That's just Kyle's visual style. If you broke both of Kyle's hands and he had to hold a pencil with his teeth, Little Inferno would still look the same.

What did you learn from the development of World of Goo that you were able to bring to Little Inferno?

GABLER With World of Goo, I learned that being an independent developer is totally possible. You don't need hundreds of employees and millions of dollars to make a game like the big studios. We were just two guys with laptops. With Little Inferno, we're three guys with laptops, and we're still just as clueless and learning as we go.

This game was originally being developed for Wii. What prompted the switch to Wii U?

GRAY We let the game determine the platform. If Little Inferno was a better fit on a Tiger handheld or a Casio wristwatch we'd totally port it there! But the Wii Remotes make great fire pokers.

What differences have you noticed between developing a game for Wii versus Wii U?

ALLAN BLOMQUIST Wii U is definitely a major upgrade over Wii. For Little Inferno, that means we're able to crank up the interactivity (and destructibility) of the toys you burn in your fire and also include more of them.

Will the game feature any specific Wii U features? Will it utilize the GamePad screen in any way?

GRAY We'd love to have a little mushroom shop where you can buy and burn Nintendo characters, but I'm sure Princess Peach would be mortified.

What is your favorite item in the game to burn? Why?

BLOMQUIST My wife and one-year-old son demand to see Kitty Kitty Poo Poo at every opportunity.

GABLER The Singing Valkyrie. She break hearts...and champagne glasses.

GRAY The Drill Chain Thrower—it's powered by a fine mixture of gasoline and testosterone! For best results, point away from face and tender areas.

What is your favorite item in real life to burn? Why?

BLOMQUIST I try not to burn my items in real life. Exceptions can be made, though, when my inventory gets too full.

GABLER I have quite the collection of scented candles.

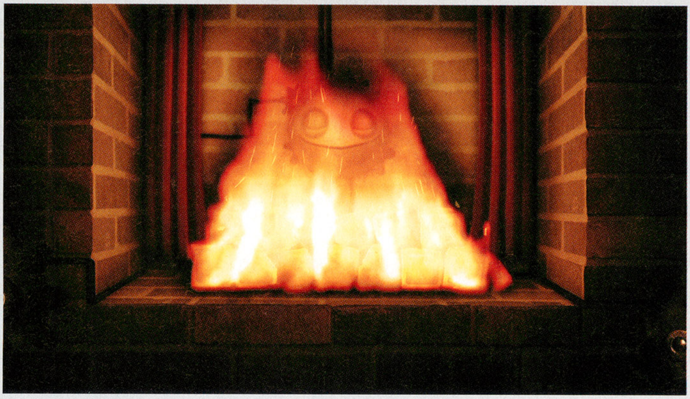
GRAY When I was 12 I made a model city with some friends for school, and then stuffed the buildings with giant Roman candle-style fireworks. Fortunately, no model citizens were harmed.

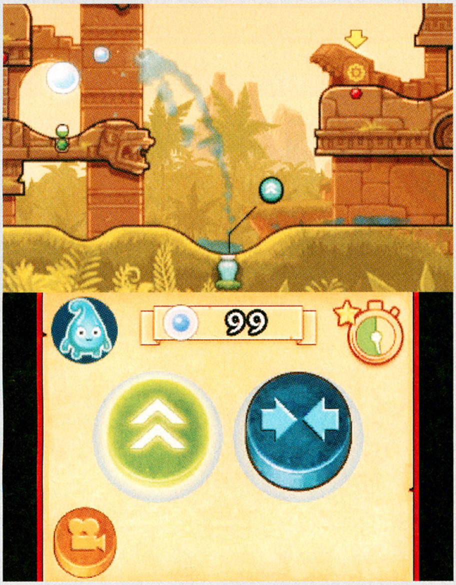
Are you afraid that parents' groups might complain about the game's "play with fire" premise?

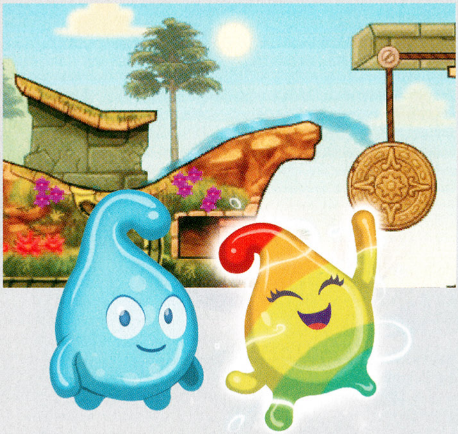
DANDY WHEELER, PR REP Little Inferno is satirical fun for the whole family! We encourage players who can't tell the difference between fiction and reality to not play any video games or watch any movies ever. Otherwise they'll believe guns are fun toys, sling-shotting birds is totally cool, eating forest mushrooms will double your size, and all action sequences take place in glorious slow motion.

Any final thoughts on the game?

DANDY WHEELER, PR REP Little Inferno is a little game with a big secret. If you already know, please don't spoil it for others! Tomorrow Corporation hopes you enjoy the game, and remember, the future is...Tomorrow!



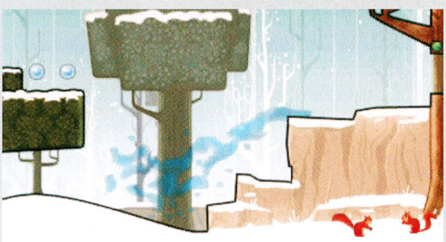




New Wave

Slippery sequel Fluidity: Spin Cycle prepares to splash down in the Nintendo eShop.

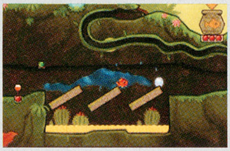
IF THERE'S ANYTHING to complain about regarding the liquid-themed WiiWare puzzle-adventure game Fluidity, it's that it didn't have much personality. Sure, it featured an innovative concept, and the tilt-based controls were intuitive and effective, but a puddle of water is not exactly the most compelling protagonist. Luckily, that didn't stop Fluidity from achieving critical acclaim, nor did it stop publisher Nintendo and developer Curve Studios from moving forward with a sequel. Fluidity: Spin Cycle is on its way to the Nintendo 3DS handheld via the Nintendo eShop, and it promises to deliver the same type of fun as its predecessor while adding new features and a whole lot more character.



Rather than a mere puddle, Fluidity: Spin Cycle puts you in control of Eddy, a benevolent Water Spirit who resides in a wizard's study. The wizard, using magical Rainbow Spirits, has given life to the pages of a captivating picture book; unfortunately, when the wizard isn't looking, an evil dark-magic entity known as Goop breaks free from its bottle and proceeds to infect the enchanted tome. Fearing for the Rainbow Spirits' well-being, Eddy also escapes his container and enters the book to stop Goop's evil influence.

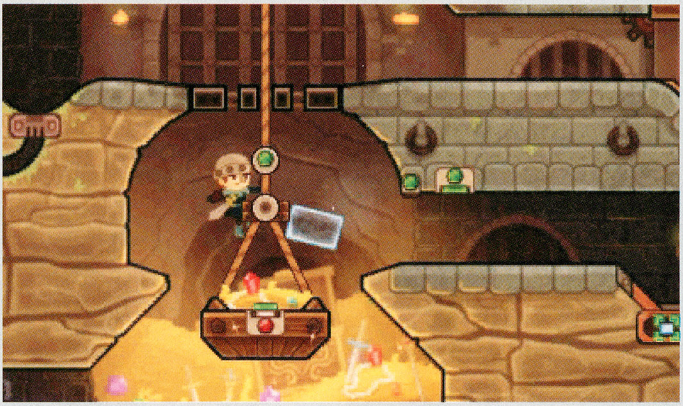
Despite being a sentient creature, Eddy behaves a lot like your standard-variety H2O once the action begins. Initially, he doesn't have many skills—you primarily move him around the environments by tilting the N3DS system a few degrees to the left or the right, which allows him to move through pipes, trickle down openings, and push past doors; tilt the system enough, and you can even move up inclines. Additionally, you can activate switches (after you've formed a pool over them) and jump on command by pressing L or R.

That might not sound thrilling at

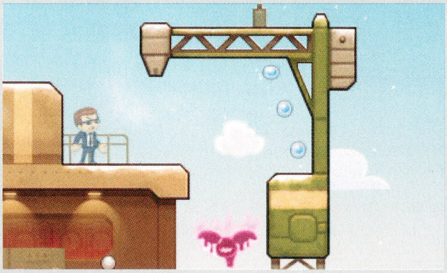


first, but interesting level design ensures there's plenty of excitement to be had. You'll ride waterwheels, make flowers bloom, carry gears into position to activate machinery, use spraying devices to reach otherwise-inaccessible locations, help goldfish reach their fishbowls, travel up the backs of dinosaurs, dodge flaming dragon breath, and more. In some spots you'll have to use well-timed movements to avoid falling into absorbent sand traps, and in others you'll even be able to manipulate gravity or trigger complex series of switches to maneuver objects into place—whatever it takes to reach the Rainbow Spirit at the end of each stage. Furthermore, certain areas require you to do more than merely tilt your N3DS system. In these levels you're given 360 degrees of control, so you may end up turning your system sideways or completely upside down in order to navigate particularly labyrinthine areas.

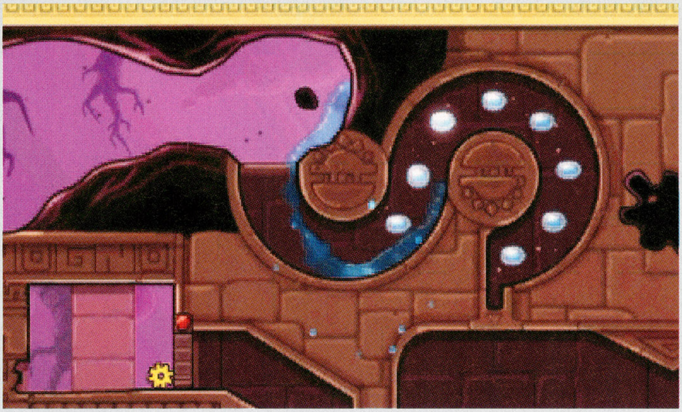
Even more gameplay options open up as the game progresses. Like in the original Fluidity, before long you'll earn new abilities, such as the power to gather your particles together for easier movement, and the ability to erupt with an explosive splash—great for pushing obstacles out of the way or smashing through weak walls to reach hidden areas. Eventually you'll also learn to change forms at designated spots—into a block of ice or a cloud of vapor. Naturally, you'll have completely different abilities in different states; as ice, for instance, you'll be able to bounce off of springs and slam into pressure-based switches to activate them, plus you won't have to worry about falling when crossing floors that are riddled with small gaps. Figuring out when to change forms and make use of each one's powers is critical to solving many of the game's puzzles.

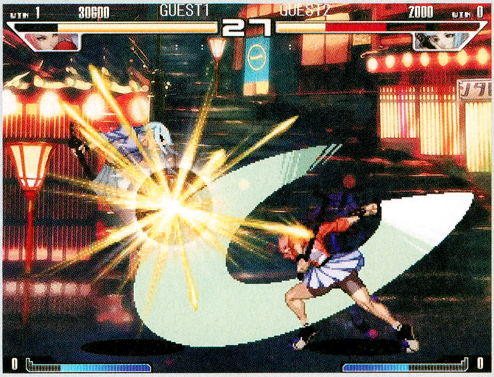


By taking advantage of Eddy's ability to transform into ice [above] and a cloud [below], you'll be able to solve all kinds of environmental puzzles.



Eddy's quest will take him through multiple colorfully themed worlds, each with numerous stages, including challenging boss battles. And although the game doesn't offer the massive, interconnected, nonlinear environments of its predecessor, you'll often want to revisit earlier levels after earning new abilities so you can use them to find secret puzzle pieces that unlock bonus "play room" levels. That adds up to a whole lot of content and replay value in what could be one of the best titles to hit the eShop this year. **—CHRIS H.**

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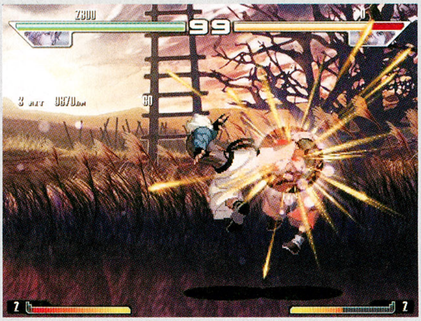
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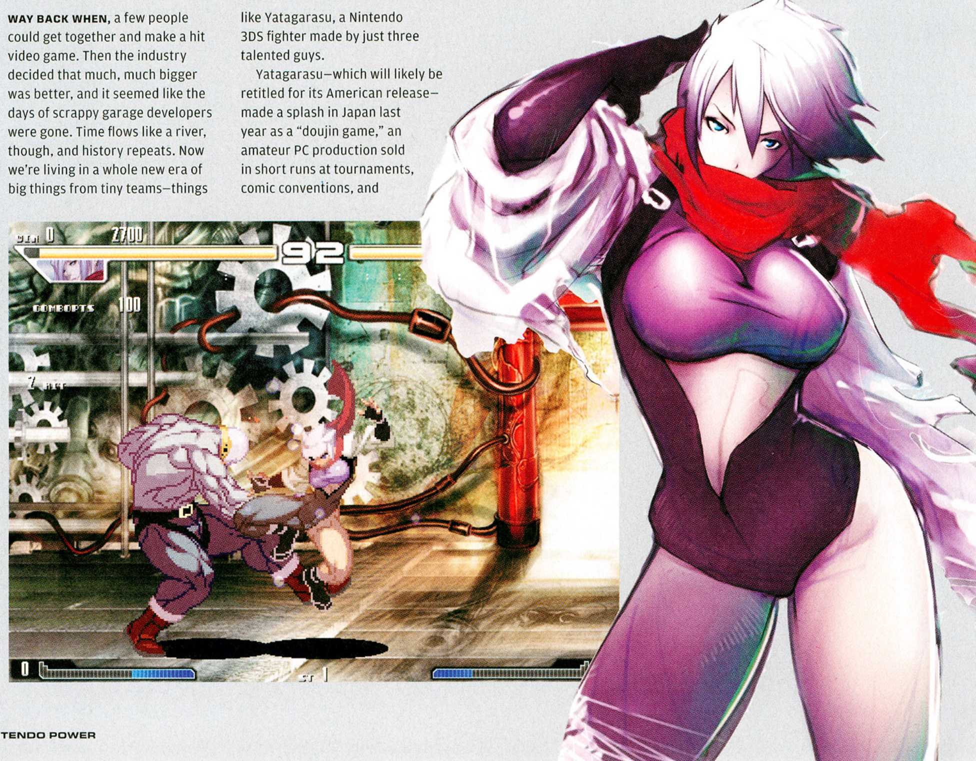
[Left] All's fair in love, war, and fighting games. Shimo and Hina rely on their swords rather than their fists.

Smash Indie Hits

A three-man team hosts hardcore 2D fighting on the Nintendo eShop.

WAY BACK WHEN, a few people could get together and make a hit video game. Then the industry decided that much, much bigger was better, and it seemed like the days of scrappy garage developers were gone. Time flows like a river, though, and history repeats. Now we're living in a whole new era of big things from tiny teams—things like Yatagarasu, a Nintendo 3DS fighter made by just three talented guys.

Yatagarasu—which will likely be retitled for its American release—made a splash in Japan last year as a "doujin game," an amateur PC production sold in short runs at tournaments, comic conventions, and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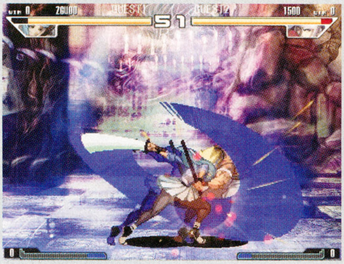
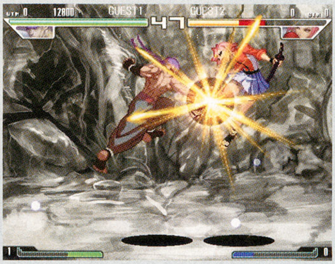
other otaku gatherings. Nicalis, the American publisher that brought Cave Story to Nintendo systems, saw potential in the PC game and plans to release an N3DS conversion soon.

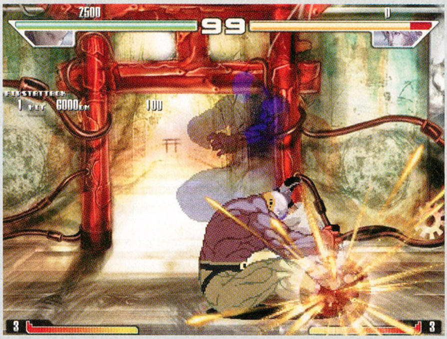
Fans of the PC version compare the gameplay to classic competitive 2D fighting games such as Super Street Fighter II Turbo, Garou: Mark of the Wolves, and Street Fighter III: Third Strike. The button layout follows the SNK style, using four commands for basic punches and kicks, but the pacing and system designs have more of a Capcom feel. The joystick motions for special moves use familiar Street Fighter conventions: quarter circles, half circles, the old Dragon Punch zig-zag. Each character has one Super Special move to dish out when his energy meter fills up, plus an extrapowerful version to trigger with a modified button command.

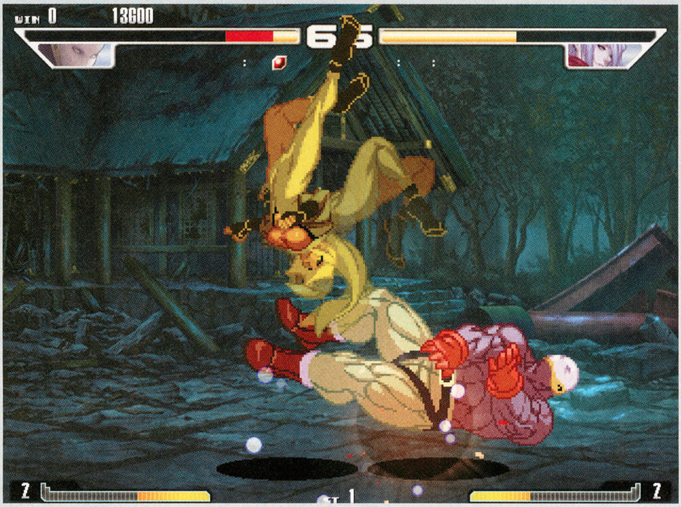
Street Fighter III's influence shows up in some very particular places. Players can choose to amp up one special move for each match—comparable to the Super Arts selection in Capcom's game—and a similar set of parry techniques are critical to master on defense. Advanced players can pull off a special parry called Button Locking, which allows a fighter with perfect timing to briefly freeze an opponent and leave that foe open for a counterpunch.





Yatagarasu's cast includes eight diverse warriors (plus a hidden boss). An oddball setting gives the crew members a lot of visual flavor—they're fighting their way across a fantasy take on 1920s Japan—and they reflect a diverse set of play styles from various 2D fighters of the past. If you like fireball-tossing heroes, give Kou and Crow a shot; grappling fans can try Chada, the big wrestling bruiser; Guile partisans have Hina, a charge character, to try on; and speed freaks can bounce around the screen with Jyuzumaru, an agile combo-chaining ninja. For players of a very specific bent, there's Jet; several online enthusiasts say he's a dead ringer, gameplaywise, for Dudley, the beloved British-gentleman pugilist from SFIII.





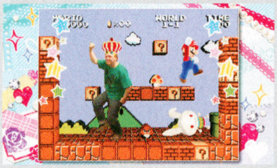
Developer Circle Edge comprises three creators: Tomoyuki "styleos" Kotani, an artist on cult favorites like Ibara and The King of Fighters; Nozomu Umezono, an ex-SNK designer and avid SFIII: Third Strike competitor; and Shiza (just Shiza), an engineer responsible for the guts of Yatagarasu. Together, they've already brought the PC game through four major version updates and many smaller adjustments, continually tweaking the balance and gameplay features, which should make for fair head-to-head battles in the N3DS game's local-wireless multiplayer mode.

They're not doing every little thing on their own, though. In an unusual twist for a fighting game, Yatagarasu features a boatload of optional audio commentary designed to re-create the arcade trash-talk experience, recorded by a top player and streaming commentator from the Japanese Street Fighter scene. Meeting certain conditions might trigger congratulations, a cutting remark, or some completely out-there bit of voice-over hidden away as an Easter egg.

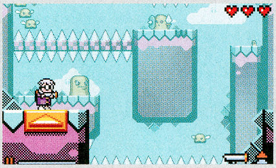
Nicalis hasn't quite nailed down a release date or an official title for the Nintendo 3DS version, but you can already check out videos of the game online. After all, it might not hurt to study up and get an early edge on the competition.

—DAVID S.

Pretty as a Picture



Following in the footsteps of its DSiWare predecessor, photo-augmentation software Sparkle Snapshots 3D is on its way to the Nintendo eShop for use with the Nintendo 3DS handheld. The program enables you to select what type of lens filter to use (normal, sharp, or soft), then take photos of yourself or your friends and enhance them with all types of special effects. You can set your images against numerous 2D or 3D backgrounds (including an elegant bedroom, a field of flowers, and an array of desserts), apply frames or foreground effects (such as confetti or a musical keyboard), then get artistic with a vast assortment of pens, stickers, ribbons, text, 3D artwork, and more; you'll even be able to download additional decorations. And though the application is aimed primarily at a female audience, Mario-themed content ensures that there's a little something for everybody. Sparkle Snapshots 3D should be available in the eShop on October 18. —**CHRIS H.**

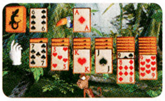


Dirty Little Bonus

There are already a lot of reasons to like downloadable platformer Mutant Mudds for the Nintendo 3DS handheld. Soon there will be 20 more—arriving in the form of a free update available in the Nintendo eShop. Featuring content from the recently released PC version of Mutant Mudds, the update will add 20 new challenging Grannie levels, which enable you to take control of main character Max's high-flying grandmother. Developer Renegade Kid expects the update to be available before the end of the year. —**CHRIS H.**

EVALUATION STATIO

N3DS DOWNLOAD



3D SOLITAIRE

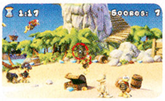
PUBLISHER: ZEN STUDIOS
GENRE: CARD GAME
PRICE: $2.99

As advertised, this is a game of solitaire, and it is in stereoscopic 3D—but you don't get much more than that. As you might suspect, a handful of 3D backgrounds doesn't add a whole lot to the traditional playing-card affair, and there are very few modes or useful features (the undo button lets you go back only one move), but at least you can select from either traditional or touch-screen controls. It's serviceable if you're looking for solitaire on Nintendo 3DS—just don't expect anything special.

—**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

N3DS DOWNLOAD



CRAZY CHICKEN: PIRATES 3D

PUBLISHER: TEYON
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: $1.99

Given its title, you would be forgiven for thinking that this is one of the best games ever. Sadly, this isn't the case. Instead, it's a bland shooting gallery that has the feel of a 10-year-old Flash game. Its (horrible) canned animations, unchanging layout, and single main level ensure that you will have seen pretty much everything this game has to offer with the minute-and-a-half time limit you're given to play it. Without the means to compare high scores with your friends, the game is rendered pointless. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

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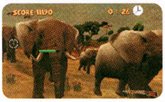

OUTDOORS UNLEASHED: AFRICA 3D

PUBLISHER: TEYON
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: $3.99

Hunting games tend to fall into one of two categories: sims (which involve hiding and sneaking) and shooting galleries (which involve showers of shell casings). Outdoors Unleashed falls neatly into the second category. Fortunately, solid production values and the dangling carrot of unlockable gear upgrades make for a fairly engaging shooting gallery. Of course, you'll have to decide for yourself whether the game's mass-slaughter approach to hunting floats your boat. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

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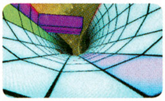


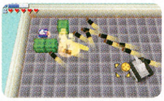
SPEEDX 3D

PUBLISHER: GAMELION STUDIOS
GENRE: RACING
PRICE: $3.99

A racer planted firmly in the hypnotic school of gaming, SpeedX 3D tasks players with navigating obstacles as they spin around the inside of a tunnel. A variety of environmental challenges—as well as the tunnel's penchant for flattening into a plane only to eventually deposit players on the exterior of the "tube"—keep things fresh. But the casual difficulty, atmospheric music, and decidedly trippy animation suggest that Gamelion is more interested in creating an experience than in making just another racing game. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD



TOUCH BATTLE TANK 3D

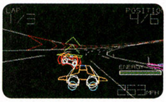
PUBLISHER: AGETEC
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $4.99

A remarkably Spartan game, Touch Battle Tank 3D offers tiny environments filled with battling tanks. That's it. Gameplay requires players to destroy all enemy tanks before moving on to the next stage, which—invariably—is essentially the same as the previous stage. It's rudimentary arcade action stuffed down your gullet ad nauseam, which can work, but not when saddled with inadequate AI and suspect aiming controls (stylus-based, in the worst way).

—**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS DOWNLOAD



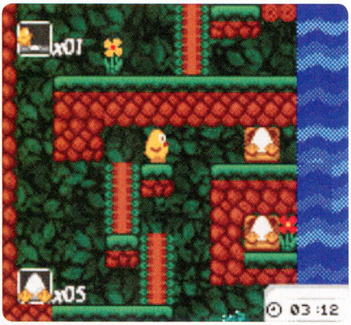
VECTORRACING

PUBLISHER: ARC SYSTEM WORKS
GENRE: RACING
PRICE: $6.99

At first glance, VectorRacing seems promising. The game's wire-frame graphics give it a delightfully retro appearance, there's a varied selection of vehicles to choose from, and the controls are smooth enough. Unfortunately, the racing itself is pretty basic and bland. For starters, the tracks are lifeless—without any obstacles or textures, most stages feel more or less the same. There aren't any pickups either, so the only way to get ahead is to meticulously run over the green arrows that boost your speed. —**CODY M.**

Hmmm...

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



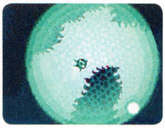
TOKI TORI

PLATFORM: GAME BOY COLOR **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 2001
PUBLISHER: TWO TRIBES/CAPCOM **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $3.99

In this adorable puzzle-platformer, you play as the titular chick who's on a mission to save his unhatched brethren. Since Toki Tori isn't the athletic type, each level provides you with a limited set of tools such as bridges, teleporters, and ice rays, which you must employ strategically to collect the eggs and avoid getting stuck. The game's puzzles are bite-sized and fun, and the gradual introduction of new items keeps you hooked. —CODY M.

Recommended

DSiWARE



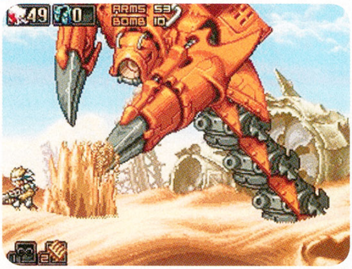
ABYSS

PUBLISHER: ENJOYUP
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

In Abyss, you guide a squid-like creature to collect orbs of light present throughout underwater mazes. Maneuvering the murky depths requires precise movement of your cephalopod, which is made possible by the game's tight controls. Although avoiding walls and obstacles isn't particularly complicated, Abyss's simple challenge meshes well with its pleasantly ambient music and peaceful atmosphere. I do wish there were more than 12 levels, though. —CODY M.

Recommended

DSiWARE



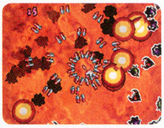
COMMANDO: STEEL DISASTER

PUBLISHER: CINEMAX **GENRE:** SHOOTER **PRICE:** 800 POINTS/$7.99

Initially released as a retail DS game a few years ago, Commando: Steel Disaster served up run-'n'-gun shooting action poured directly from the Metal Slug mold. Cool weapons, slick animation, intense combat, massive bosses–Steel Disaster had all the makings of a sleeper arcade-style hit. It did not, however, get a lot of hype, and many gamers missed out. Fortunately, DSiWare provides a perfect opportunity to correct that mistake; not only does this edition contain most (though not all) of the original's content, but it provides a much more sane difficulty level. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

DSiWARE



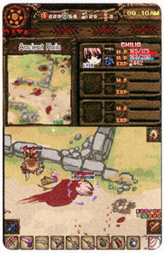
ESCAPE THE VIRUS: SHOOT 'EM UP

PUBLISHER: TEYON
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

Teyon's game plan is clear enough; we can expect minor variations on its mediocre shooter series until the weakest among us stop buying this drivel. This time around we get two modes: Shooter (a third-rate variation on Asteroids) and the slightly more interesting Territory, in which players defend a black hole against enemy invaders. If you're wondering what black holes have to do with viruses, you're thinking harder than Teyon. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



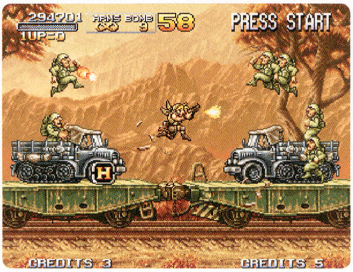
THE LOST TOWN–THE JUNGLE

PUBLISHER: CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: STRATEGY
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

As with its predecessor, The Lost Town–The Dust, this entry in the series tasks players with defending a camp on a day/night schedule (preparing during the day, defending at night). The RPG formula still works, but this sequel adds almost nothing to the previous game. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



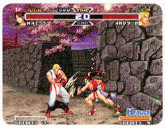
METAL SLUG X

PLATFORM: NEOGEO **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1999
PUBLISHER: D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK **GENRE:** SHOOTER **PRICE:** 900 POINTS

Taken on its own, Metal Slug X is a pretty great arcade shoot-'em-up. Sure, there's some pretty severe slowdown at times, but the game is loads of fun, packed to bursting with chaotic action and detailed hand-drawn visuals, and it gets even better when you play with a friend. The only issue is that Metal Slug X is a remixed version of Metal Slug 2 (which has been available on Virtual Console for years). Metal Slug X is arguably the superior version, but if you already have Metal Slug 2, X is rather unnecessary. If you're new to Metal Slug, though, it's a moot point; this game is a blast, and it certainly merits checking out. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



REAL BOUT FATAL FURY SPECIAL

PLATFORM: NEOGEO
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1997
PUBLISHER: D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK
GENRE: FIGHTING
PRICE: 900 POINTS

I've played loads of SNK fighters over the years, but I had not checked out Real Bout Fatal Fury Special until now. I'm kicking myself for overlooking it, as this one-on-one fighting title is good fun. With its diverse roster of 19 characters (not counting hidden ones), well-rendered graphics, and a tough-but-not-totally-impossible difficulty level, Real Bout Fatal Fury Special is definitely worth giving a whirl. —JUSTIN C.

Recommended

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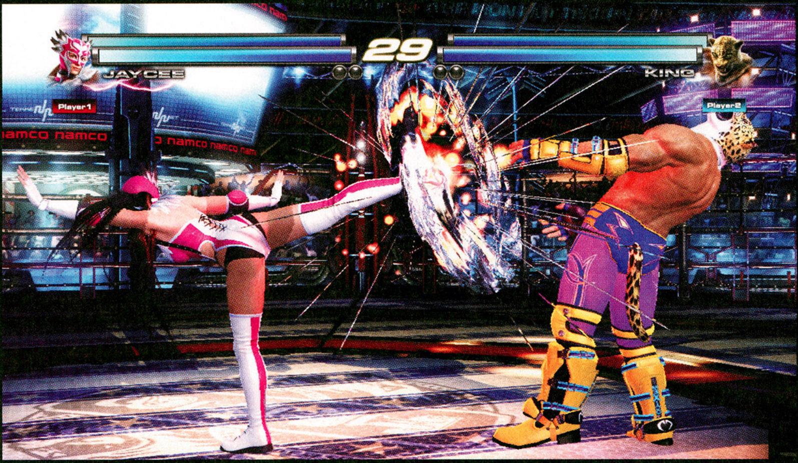
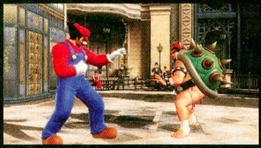


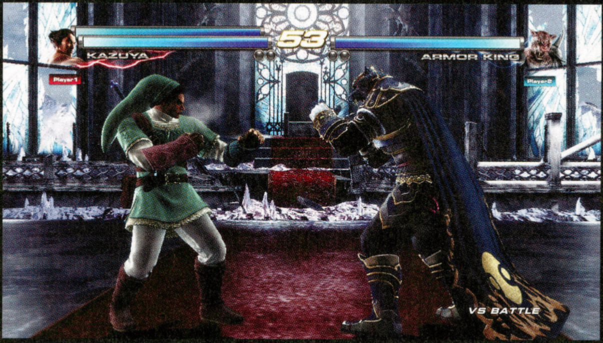
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

Four fists are better than two.

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2 for the Wii U console just might be the ultimate game in Namco Bandai's long-running 3D fighting franchise. As is typical for the series, this latest installment (and the first to arrive on a Nintendo home console) features a deep combat system, complemented by hard-hitting two-on-two battles and a character lineup that includes nearly every Tekken fighter ever created—more than 50 playable warriors in all. Whether you prefer the martial-arts prowess of series mainstay Heihachi Mishima, the grappling skills of the masked King, the speed of Ling Xiaoyu, the unpredictability of Christie Monteiro, or the vicious weirdness of Alex the velociraptor, there's a duo for every player in TTT2's vast roster.



"I would say that Tekken Tag Tournament 2 is the best version of Tekken yet," proclaims series producer Katsuhiro Harada. "[It] has succeeded in creating a highly evolved tag game by simultane-



Is that Link fighting Ganondorf!? Not exactly, but the Tekken fighters are wearing their threads.

ously portraying four characters on one screen for the first time in Tekken history—probably for the first time in the 3D fighting-game market as well. In addition to that...the character lineup, the types of stage designs, and the entire volume of content are also the greatest in the series's history."

Newcomers should have no problem jumping in and unleashing impressive-looking strikes and combos—by default, punches are mapped to the X and Y Buttons on the Wii U GamePad controller, whereas kicks are performed with A and B, and special moves can be assigned to the touch screen—while fighting-game veterans will enjoy taking advantage of techniques such as bound moves (attacks that bounce your opponents off the ground), tag assaults (which allow you to briefly bring in your partner mid-combo to deliver longer, more-punishing beatdowns), and devastating tag throws. You'll also want to master gameplay systems such as Tag Crash (which lets you tag your way out of dangerous situations) and Rage mode (which boosts your strength after you've taken significant damage).

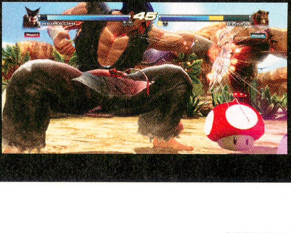
In addition to duking it out against the CPU—which rewards you with one of Tekken's trademark spectacular CG endings upon defeating the final boss—you can fight against other players either locally or online; there's even a four-player Pair Play mode in which two-person teams battle for supremacy. (And don't worry; although not every player can use a GamePad controller, others can join in using Classic Controllers or Wii U Pro Controllers.)

But TTT2 isn't only about knocking the stuffing out of your opponents. In the game's story-driven Fight Lab mode, you get to customize your own ultimate fighting robot while honing (or learning) your Tekken skills via extensive training missions. Even more exciting is the exclusive Mushroom Battle mode. In this contest, power-up mushrooms straight from the Mario series move across the playfield for you to collect or avoid. Super Mushrooms and Mega Mushrooms make you grow; Poison Mushrooms make you shrink; gold mushrooms provide a speed boost; and invincibility stars, of course, make you invulnerable. There's a good deal of strategy involved; the bigger you get, the harder you hit, but the smaller you are, the easier it is to avoid your opponent.

"I thought that the serious part and the funny part of Tekken would really match the world of this Mushroom Battle," Harada states. "Not only is it crazy and funny, but people wouldn't be able to keep themselves from fighting seriously once they try it out. It's a really good mode. It's something that you could only do by collaborating with Nintendo, right?"

And that's only part of the Nintendo-themed goodness. The game features several bonus costumes that will let you dress Tekken warriors as your favorite Nintendo stars: for example, Heihachi as Mario, Jin as Luigi, Ganryu as Bowser, Kazuya as Link, Lili as Zelda, Leo as Sheik, and Zafina as Zero Suit Samus! Without question, the Wii U version of Tekken Tag Tournament 2 will be a fighting game unlike anything else out there. —**CHRIS H.**

Wii U PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**



DISNEY EPIC MICKEY: POWER OF ILLUSION

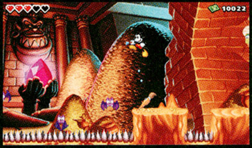
An epic platformer with a nostalgic twist

MORE THAN 20 years ago, Mickey Mouse ventured into the Castle of Illusion on the Sega Genesis system. After overcoming the numerous hazards and foes within the castle's magical worlds, Mickey managed to battle and defeat the wicked witch Mizrabel and save his beloved Minnie Mouse from her clutches. It was a spectacular journey for Disney's main mouse, but once the adventure was over, it was all but forgotten—until now.

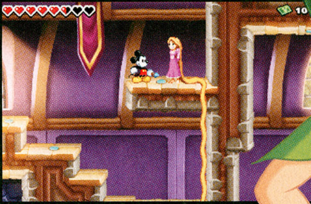
In Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion, Mizrabel and her castle have been relegated to Wasteland, the realm of abandoned Disney ideas. However, Mizrabel's not ready to fade into obscurity just yet, so she concocts a nasty plan that involves pulling prominent Disney characters into Wasteland. Naturally, Mickey isn't going to just stand by and let Mizrabel's scheme go unchecked, so he enters the Castle of Illusion once again to put an end to her plot.

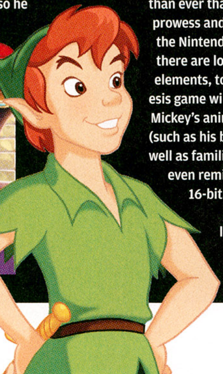
The castle has changed a lot in two decades. The level designs and enemies are almost completely new, and the place looks better than ever thanks to the graphical prowess and stereoscopic 3D of the Nintendo 3DS handheld. But there are lots of retro-inspired elements, too—fans of the Genesis game will instantly recognize Mickey's animations and moves (such as his butt-bounce attack), as well as familiar sound effects and even remixed music from the 16-bit classic.

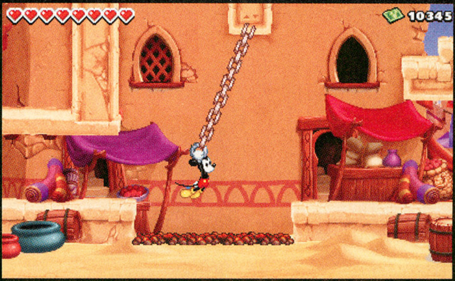
Mickey, however, has learned many new tricks since his last visit to the castle—in



[Above] The Cave of Wonders is full of treasure—and hazardous pits of spikes.







particular, his trademark Epic Mickey ability to use paint and thinner to create and destroy objects. In addition to simply blasting enemies with paint projectiles, you can use the substances at designated spots via the touch screen to erase obstacles, draw platforms, and more. Sometimes your objective is very straightforward—such as drawing a magic carpet to get across a chasm—while at other times the situations are more complex. At one point, for instance, you'll need to launch Mickey from a series of cannons, but you'll have to create some cannons and destroy others (so they don't launch you in the wrong direction) to make your way through the room. In another area, you'll encounter a deadly blade swinging from a chain; if you erase the chain, the blade will fall harmlessly to the ground, but you'll then need to redraw the chain so you can use it to swing over a pit.

Despite being set inside a castle, the environments you encounter are wildly varied, and they often take the guise of familiar Disney locales. (It is the Castle of *Illusion*, after all.) The first world you visit, the castle's east wing, takes its inspiration from Disney's *Peter Pan*; you'll race across London rooftops, navigate the Neverland Jungle, and battle ne'r-do-wells on Captain Hook's ship, the *Jolly Roger*. In the west wing, you'll encounter stages based on *Aladdin*, in which you'll fight burly guards in Agrabah before overcoming numerous challenges in the Cave of Wonders and squaring off against Jafar (who, as in the movie, transforms himself into a giant snake).

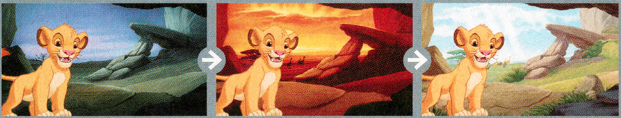
As you explore the stages, you'll come across a plethora of Disney characters who Mizrabel has trapped in the Castle of Illusion. From Goofy, Donald, Pluto, and Uncle Scrooge to Ariel, Simba, Beast, and Cinderella, the cast is a certifiable who's-who of the Disney universe. As you find and rescue the characters, they'll set up temporary homes in the castle, essentially creating a bustling community populated by your favorite Disney heroes and villains. Using collectibles you acquire, you'll be able to upgrade the characters' rooms, which in turn unlocks access to new items and quests, thus providing ample reason to return to levels you've already completed. Sometimes you'll even earn new sketch powers—limited-use abilities that provide a variety of effects, such as creating platforms at will or summoning an ally to help you thwart foes. A Scrooge McDuck sketch (which causes Scrooge to pogo-jump on enemies like he did in the classic NES DuckTales game) is particularly cool.

Judging by what we've played so far, the game seems set to offer an exemplary combination of old and new, mixing classic-style gameplay with tons of fresh ideas, topped off with ample Disney magic. Mizrabel's plans just might pay off after all—people may very well remember Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion for a long, long time. —**CHRIS H.**

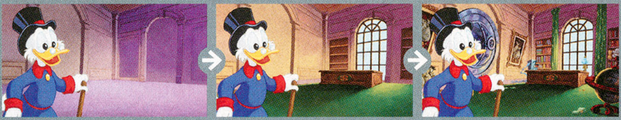
DECORATING WITH MAGIC

As you upgrade characters' rooms within the Castle of Illusion, not only will you unlock new quests and items, but the rooms will undergo significant visual upgrades. Here are a few examples.

SIMBA



UNCLE SCROOGE



N3DS **PUBLISHER: DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: DREAMRIFT
RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2012

ARKHAM
ORDER
ESCAPE IS IMPOSSIBLE
ARKHAM
GOTHAM

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY—ARMORED EDITION

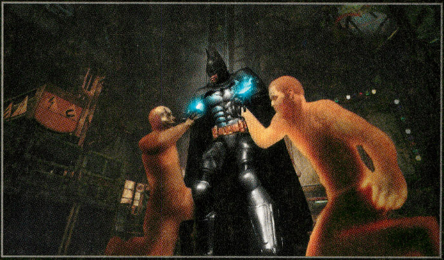
The Dark Knight soars into the Wii U launch lineup.

ONE OF 2011'S most celebrated titles, Batman: Arkham City, proved that developer Rocksteady's heralded original—Batman: Arkham Asylum—was no flash in the pan. Arkham City maintained the intense, dynamic combat and fantastic attention to detail that characterized its predecessor, while adding to the formula an enormous open world, a host of new weapons and gadgets, and even more depth. It's fitting, then, that the Caped Crusader should make a launch-day appearance on the Wii U console, boasting all of the action from the initial release, and some new frills to boot.

In Arkham City, a large, rundown section of Gotham City has been converted into a massive prison; the streets are crawling with criminals and supervillains, and, naturally, Batman finds himself right in the thick of it. When it comes to making the player actually *feel* like Batman—which has been at the forefront of the Arkham games' success—the Wii U integration is impressively elegant. Essentially, the screen on the Wii U GamePad becomes your Bat Computer, letting you access all of the game's functionality with touch-operated sophistication, rather than making you hunt through submenus with your Control Stick. Switching between weapons, for instance, is as easy as selecting the desired armament and dragging it to the appropriate area for quick selection (you can have up to three weapons slotted in at a time, selectable via the Control Pad). Your overhead map updates in real time as you move through the game world, and an additional "sonar" mode (think the motion tracker from *Aliens*) shows you the location and movement of enemies and hidden items in range.

That's not all. Many of the game's gadgets are controlled via the touch screen, and have been rebuilt to take advantage of Wii U. Most notable is the ability to control the direction and velocity of your Batarang and other projectile weapons with the controller's built-in gyroscope and accelerometer; you guide the projectile through the air, viewing the experience from its perspective via the touch screen (alternatively, you can handle this the old-fashioned way via the Control Sticks). Triggering your explosive gel makes use of the new hardware as well: the process is as simple as selecting the gel on the touch screen when an enemy is in range, and watching the fireworks that ensue.

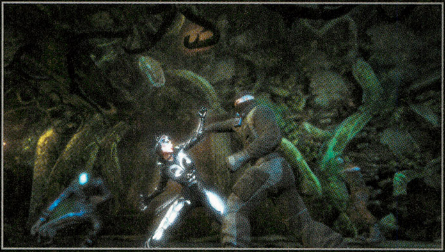
Equally slick is the integration of the game's persistent world, and all of the action that comes with it. Anything that's communicated to you via your character's earpiece—mission objectives, side quests, updates on ambient crimes from Arkham PD's scanner—is routed through the speaker in your GamePad, which helps to nicely bind the fantasy of the experience. You can monitor the screen for these crimes, as well, selecting the ones you want to pursue and the radar feeds you want to pay attention to. Various other bits and bobs are communicated and interacted with via the touch screen, ranging from a flashing button when you've got an upgrade available to key intel on your various supervillain targets. An unexpectedly cool moment comes at the very start of the game, when you "log in" as Batman via your fingerprint.



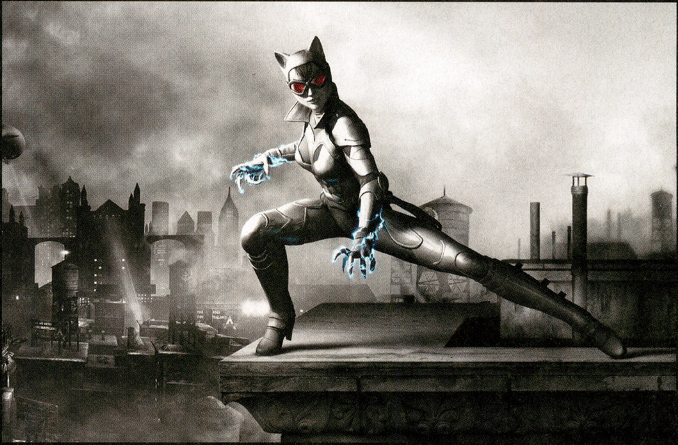
Also worth mentioning (and highlighted in the game title) is the Battle Armor Tech suit that has been created exclusively for the Wii U version of the game. Both Batman and Catwoman have custom-made, steel-enforced getups that appear throughout the adventure, during both gameplay and cut-scenes. Additionally, a special BAT mode allows for some bonus backside-kicking: build up your meter by landing combos and skilled attacks, then unleash BAT mode to bring a damage buff to your standard combat and critical strikes. A glowing visual filter engages during these moments, as well, drawing your enemies out of the shadows so you can actually *see* what you're pummeling.

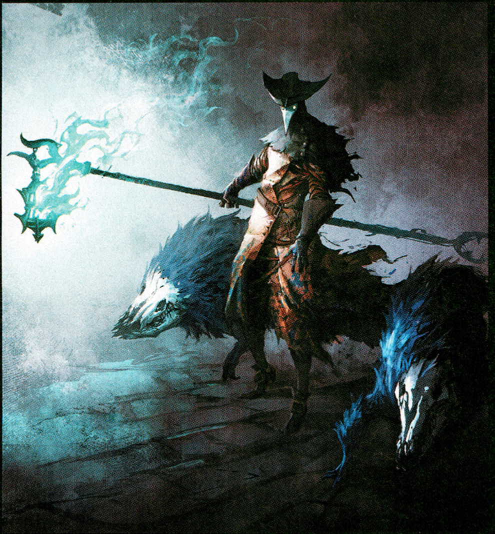
Finally, Warner Bros. has seen fit to include all the bonus content from Arkham City's initial release. These include the Nightwing pack, which adds Batman's ally Nightwing as a playable character for the game's challenge maps; the Robin pack, which does the same for Batman's trusty sidekick (with both Animated Series and Red Robin skins); and new Black Mask and Freight Train challenge maps. If you still haven't gotten the chance to play Arkham City, the Wii U may be the best way yet to experience it. —EVAN S.

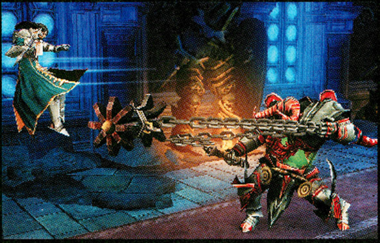
Wii U PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **ROCKSTEADY GAMES**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**



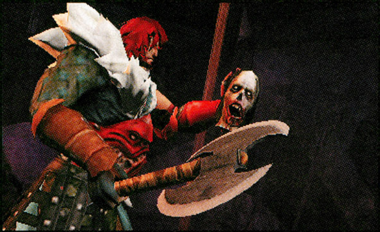
Batman may be the star of Arkham City, but Catwoman gets her share of the playable spotlight as well. She even has her own armored suit.







[Below] Simon Belmont's collection of severed zombie heads doubtlessly makes him the life of any party.

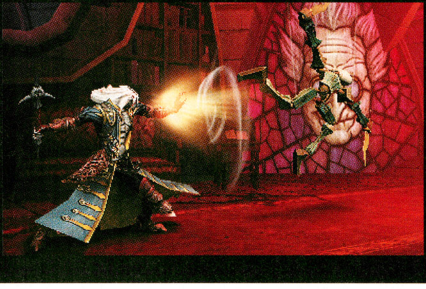


CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW—MIRROR OF FATE

The fated hour falls late.

FIRST THE BAD news: Konami's Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate has been delayed until early next year. Now for the good news: the more we see of the vampire-hunting action-adventure game, the more impressive it looks.

Continuing the reimagined saga of the Belmont clan and its battle against Dracula, Mirror of Fate places you in control of multiple characters as you attempt to defy destiny by hunting down and defeating the dark lord across generations. To do so, you'll have to explore Dracula's massive castle, which is brimming with environmental variety; in addition to standard castle keeps and catacombs, you'll visit creepy old laboratories, abandoned mines, torture chambers, and the decaying grounds surrounding the castle. There's even a twisted area known as the Toymaker's Domain that's inhabited by living (or possibly undead) puppets. Luckily, the game's deep combat system promises a wealth of ways to grind your enemies into dust, be it with the traditional Castlevania whip or one of the character-specific subweapons.



Though we won't be able to bring the fight to Dracula as soon as we'd hoped, the evidence so far indicates that Castlevania's first foray on the Nintendo 3DS system will be worth the wait. —**CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **MERCURYSTEAM**
RELEASE: **Q1 2013**

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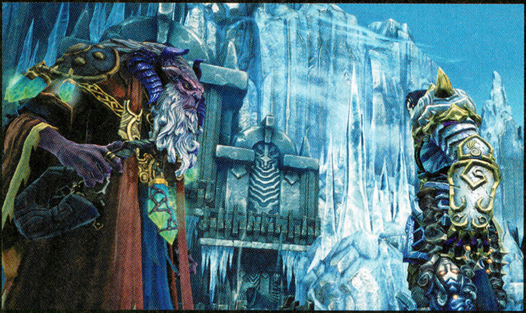
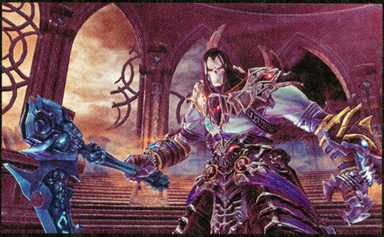
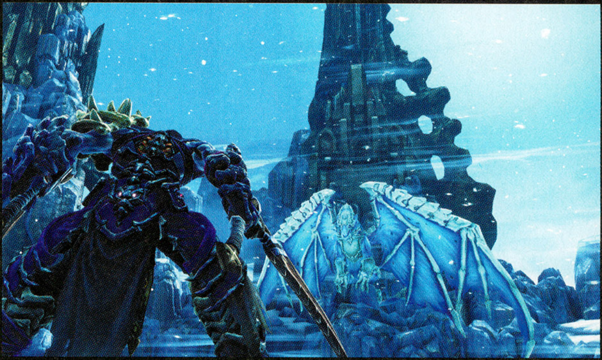
DARKSIDERS II

The grim reaper breaks the ice.





If you're not happy with the way Death is outfitted, you can acquire new weapons and pieces of armor from defeated foes or from merchants like Ostegoth [left].



DARKSIDERS II MIGHT be available for other platforms already, but our hands-on experience tells us that the version for the Wii U system will be worth the wait. Not only will the Mature-rated game take advantage of the Wii U GamePad controller's unique features (more on that in a bit), but this iteration of Darksiders II also has on its disc what was downloadable content for the other editions. This means the retailer-exclusive, preorder-incentive stuff from the other versions (the additional side quests from GameStop, for example) is available to everyone who purchases Darksiders II for Wii U. Furthermore, the Argul's Tomb downloadable-content pack is included on the disc—and we got to experience this new adventure firsthand.

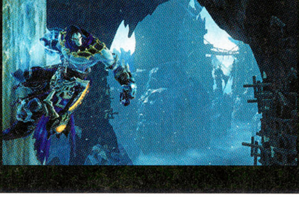
But first a little background. War, one of the horsemen of the apocalypse, has been accused of kick-starting Armageddon early, so Death embarks on a quest to clear his brother's name. While undertaking this task, the grim reaper journeys to locales such as the Kingdom of the Dead, wherein he encounters folks such as the Deposed King, Argul, who was the former ruler of the kingdom before he was—as his title suggests—overthrown by the Dead King.

The Argul's Tomb quest has you exploring the Deposed King's world, a frozen land teeming with icy enemies. However, unlike the majority of the game, in which you dispatch these foes via hacking and slashing, the beginning of Argul's Tomb is played as a third-person shooter. You pick up a grenade launcher–style firearm, proceed down a canyonesque path, and blast any and all foes that get in your way. Because you tap ZR to fire explosive shells and then press ZL to ignite them, you're able to employ a little strategy in your shooting; you can use the explosives as remotely detonated landmines, for instance.

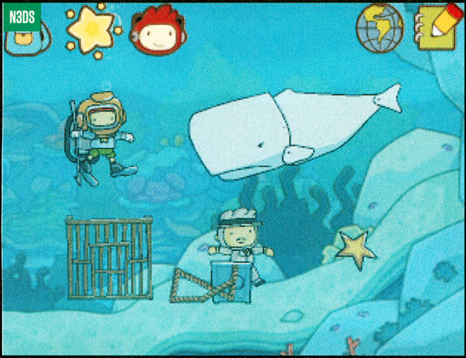
Once you've reached the end of this shooting section, you are granted access to the first of two dungeons. Unfortunately, you can't use your firearm here; instead you must get up close and personal with your enemies. You tap Y for your primary weapons (a pair of handheld scythes), and X for your secondary ones (such as axes, claws, maces, and tonfas). Additionally, you can employ abilities that buff Death's strength, for example, or summon a group of ghouls to fight alongside you; all you have to do is press the appropriate icons on the touch screen. Even with these powers at your disposal, though, things can get hairy, so you'll want to evade when necessary. You can do so by tapping R or by flicking the GamePad. (We were told that motion controls also come into play during swimming and horse-riding sections of the game.)

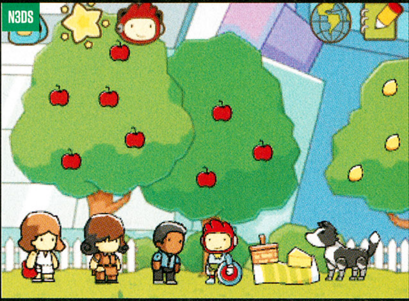
The two dungeons we played through required the use of the Voidwalker ability, with which you can create portals to get to previously unreachable areas. Portals can be placed only on magic circles, so you can likely get a general idea of where you need to go next. These circles can be well-hidden, however, and you have to use some trial and error, as there's no indication as to whether you should use a regular portal or a charged portal; the latter expels objects—Death included—at a high velocity. (You hold and release ZR to place a charged portal, as opposed to just tapping ZR for a regular one.)

Our demo culminated in a boss battle with an enormous ice dragon called Frostbane. We weren't able to experience this confrontation in its entirety, but we look forward to doing so when Darksiders II is released at the Wii U launch. —JUSTIN C.



Wii U
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES
RELEASE: HOLIDAY 2012





[Above] A typical picnic in the park is anything but when Maxwell and his magical object-creating notebook are involved.

SCRIBBLENAUTS UNLIMITED

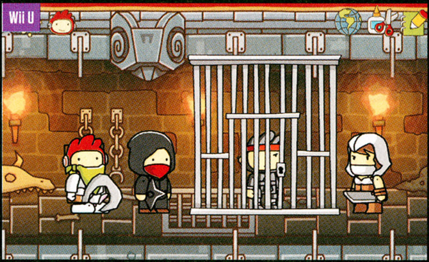
Twisting words

YOU'D THINK THAT most people would be satisfied with the ability to summon almost any English noun and modify it with hundreds of different adjectives. But apparently being able to will a fire-breathing jackalope into existence just wasn't awesome *enough*; someone needed a fire-breathing jackalope that suffers from explosive lactose-intolerance and farts out mummified piranhas whenever it rains. To that guy we present Scribblenauts Unlimited.

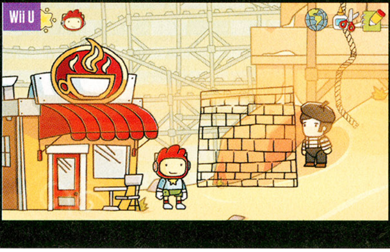
Now in addition to the series's ever-expanding dictionary of conjurable words, players can use an object editor to modify their creations in essentially limitless ways. Casual players can focus on cosmetic features, using simple controls to recolor parts of an object or fuse multiple objects together, and use pull-down menus to change physical properties and behaviors. But truly determined players can dig even deeper, using an intuitive system of menus to write hundreds of lines of code that dictate every aspect of their custom object's behavior. "A lot of people talk about the educational nature of Scribblenauts in writing and learning words," notes creative director Jeremiah Slaczka. "[The object editor's] scripting language is very high-level and actually teaches programming in a way."

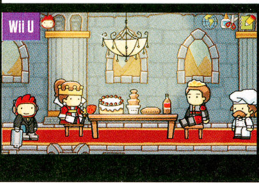
The object editor is exclusive to the Wii U version of the game, but the N3DS iteration of Scribblenauts Unlimited does include most of the title's other new features, including more than 30 open-world levels where players can engage in quests or simply screw around. The open-world structure can lead to some interesting situations: In a medieval-themed level a knight will ask you to wipe out the orcs laying siege to the castle, while the orcs will ask for help sneaking past the knight. Siding with the orcs—say, by conjuring costumes for the invaders—could lead to other quest-givers within the castle being slain, or may present opportunities for further quests. Players are free to complete the quest one way, see what happens, and then reset the level and make the opposite choice, keeping the rewards they earned the first time around.

We won't have to wait long to dig into this quirky sandbox: both versions of Scribblenauts Unlimited are scheduled to ship day-and-date with the Wii U hardware launch. —**CASEY L.**



[Above] Things don't look too good for Maxwell's brother. Good thing you can create whatever you need to rescue him.





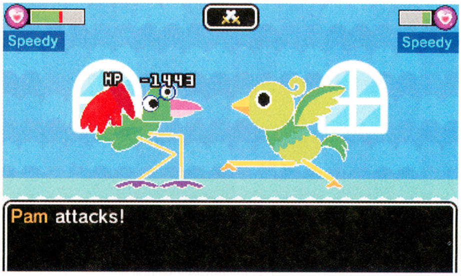
Wii U **N3DS** PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **5TH CELL**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**

FREAKYFORMS DELUXE: YOUR CREATIONS, ALIVE!

Le freak, c'est chic.

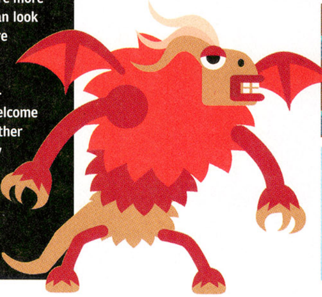
This enhanced version of last year's well-received eShop title maintains all of the aspects that made the original so enjoyable. It focuses on an easy-to-use yet versatile tool to design your own creatures. You then lead your critters (called Formees) across an ever-expanding planet, where they complete quests and discover new items to add to your Formees. In this Deluxe version of the game, there are more parts to choose from than before, so your custom heroes can look even more bizarre. There are also dungeons to explore, where you'll encounter enemies and engage in simple RPG-style battles. Your Formees' stats can be altered with new special powers, as well. Since half of the fun of Freakyforms is sharing your designs with a friend, the multiplayer mode is a welcome bonus. Thanks to Download Play, two people can play together while concocting their own Formees. Sounds like a great way to freak out. —**PHIL T.**

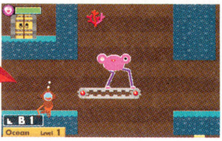
N3DS **PUBLISHER:** **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **ASOBISM**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2012**

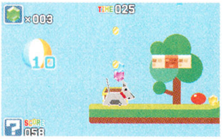


Pam attacks!

[Above] Get your freak on with other creatures in simple RPG-esque combat.





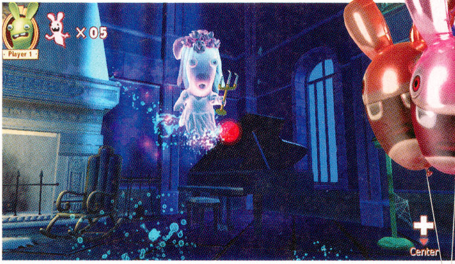


RABBIDS LAND

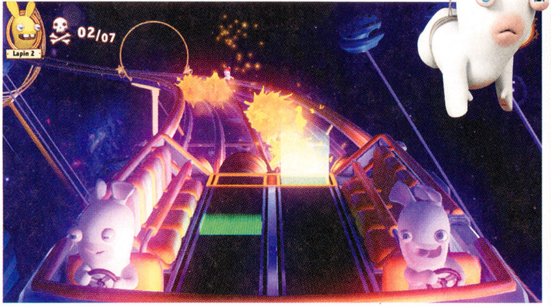
Amusement park? More like insanity park.

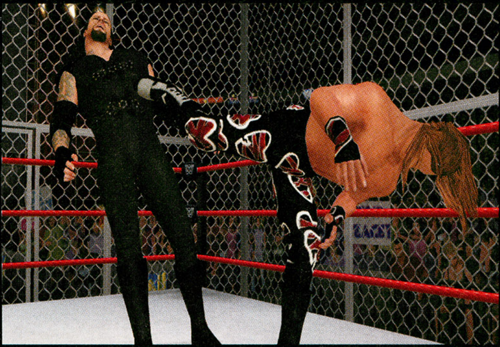
That's right—Ubisoft's lunatic Rabbids are back, and they're bringing their unique brand of craziness to the Wii U console. This time the psychotic critters have overrun an amusement park, which adds up to all manner of multiplayer wackiness inspired by popular theme-park attractions, such as a rollercoaster, a pirate-boat ride, and a haunted house. The main mode in Rabbids Land is the trophy race, a board-game-style contest for up to four players in which you'll compete in minigames, answer trivia questions, and find special items in an attempt to score the most trophies. Naturally, there's plenty of variety—in one minigame you'll tilt the Wii U GamePad to attempt to crush your adversaries with giant balls, and in another you'll rhythmically shake the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers to throw fireballs while your opponent attempts to dodge them. All this and throwable cows, too! —**CHRIS H.**

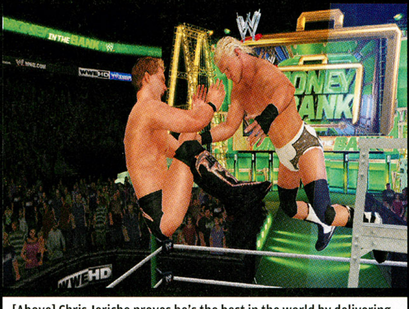
Wii U **PUBLISHER:** **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT PARIS**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**



[Below] Regular rollercoasters aren't extreme enough for the Rabbids. Rollercoasters that spew fireballs are what it's all about.







[Above] Chris Jericho proves he's the best in the world by delivering his Codebreaker finishing move to Dolph Ziggler in midair.

WWE '13

Get ready for an attitude adjustment.

EARLIER THIS YEAR at WrestleMania XXVIII, millions (and millions) of fans around the world got to witness The Rock, one of the most popular wrestlers of WWE's Attitude Era, go head-to-head with John Cena, one of the biggest WWE stars of today. Soon, gamers will be able to witness a similar collision of past and present when WWE '13 arrives on the Wii console.

As you'd expect, WWE '13 has all of the typical enhancements that come with an annual franchise update—there are new characters (bringing the playable roster to more than 80), new moves (finishers performed while your opponent is leaping through the air, for example), and new match types (including special referee matches that enable you to be as fair or as biased as you want). There are also new interactive gameplay elements—so-called "spectacular moments" such as smashing an opponent through the ring barricade, executing a finishing move on top of the announcers' table, or causing the ring to collapse when one superheavyweight superplexes another off the top turnbuckle.

But what separates WWE '13 from a typical sequel is its focus on the extremely popular late-1990s Attitude Era of professional wrestling—a time when WWE was constantly evolving, innovating, and creating new stars in an attempt to stay one step ahead of the competition. To that end, WWE '13 features more than 30 Attitude Era characters (including Mike Tyson!), as well as a full-fledged Attitude Era Campaign mode. Replacing the Road to WrestleMania mode from previous titles, the Attitude Era Campaign is this game's main story-driven single-player mode; it will focus on eight top performers (Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels, Triple H, The Undertaker, Kane, Mankind, The Rock, and Steve Austin) and allow players to relive approximately two years' worth of WWE highlights, culminating at WrestleMania XV. By activating special WWE Attitude Moment button-press sequences, you'll even be able to

New SUPER MARIO BROS.™ 2

Use Parental Controls to restrict 3D mode for children 6 and under.

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EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief

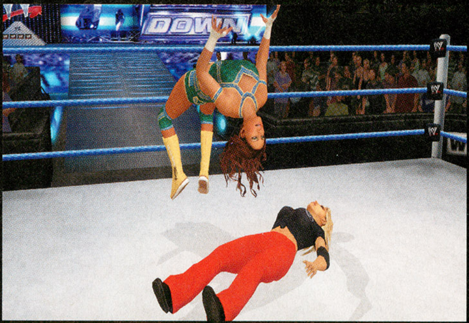
make matches unfold much as they originally did on TV.

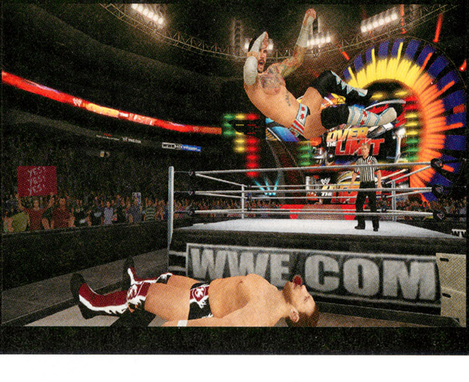
But what if you're more interested in current WWE performers such as CM Punk, Brock Lesnar, Sheamus, Rey Mysterio, Cody Rhodes, or Zack Ryder? In that case you'll want to put them through their paces in the new-and-improved Universe mode. Though previous years' iterations of this manager/career mode were full of promise, they often fell short in many gamers' eyes, which is why this year's edition has a special weapon: Paul Heyman. The former ECW promoter (and current WWE manager) knows what it's like to craft wrestling storylines, and he was brought in to bring more authenticity and variety to Universe mode.

"Within WWE '13, it's all a matter of spontaneity and the fact that you give the gamer the chance to play the writer, the producer. They get to be Vince McMahon...they get to make the decisions...they get to determine who goes for the title, who main-events at WrestleMania," explains Heyman. "I kept it true to life in how a scenario would play out. Usually in video games...the storylines are rushed. You want to break up a tag team? You put them in the ring and break them up. And in this game you get to tell the 15-, 16-, 17-, 18-week storyline arc that leads to the breakup, and you get to actually make it happen and manipulate the characters in the way that you want so that you get to create the intricate storylines and the twists and the turns, and not just wrestler A turns on wrestler B and now they have a match. Now you get to tell the story as you would want to tell it, and you get to tell it over the course of 4 weeks, 8 weeks, 16 weeks—a whole storyline arc."

Between the ambitious Universe improvements, massive character and feature list, and emphasis on one of wrestling's most popular eras, WWE '13 just might be the game that grappling fans have been waiting for. —CHRIS H.

Wii
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: YUKE'S
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2012





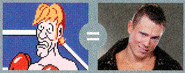
ALL ABOUT THE GAMES

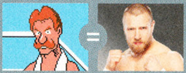
The WWE athletes aren't just video game superstars; they're also gamers themselves. Here's what some of WWE's top talents had to say about their favorite classic Nintendo games.

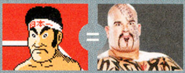
BRODUS CLAY "Tecmo Bowl, Super Mario, Donkey Kong—you name it, I played it. I loved it! Basketball games...I was all over it. Metroid—that was a big game that I liked. [In Pro Wrestling] I loved Star Man [and] the fish guy with the fork. Of course, Super Mario Bros., it goes without saying, was one of my favorites. Trying to figure out how to get the turtles to get the umpteen-thousand men, that was one of my biggest things. Hitting the flagpole.... Yeah, I played all the time. Probably too much."

AJ LEE "My [cell phone] case is a Nintendo controller! I think my favorites were Excitebike and Super Mario. Besides Mario, I have a really special love for—and I will always call her—Princess Toadstool. Not Princess Peach. [Laughs] She was kind of like my female hero growing up. I refuse to call her Princess Peach, by the way! I don't know what it is, but that's how I learned who she was, and that's who she'll be."

CM PUNK Before we spoke to CM Punk, he mentioned the NES classic Punch-Out!!, so we asked the champ to compare the wrestlers of WWE to Punch-Out!! adversaries. Here's what he came up with:


Glass Joe The Miz


Von Kaiser Daniel Bryan


Piston Honda Tensai

Don Flamenco Zack Ryder

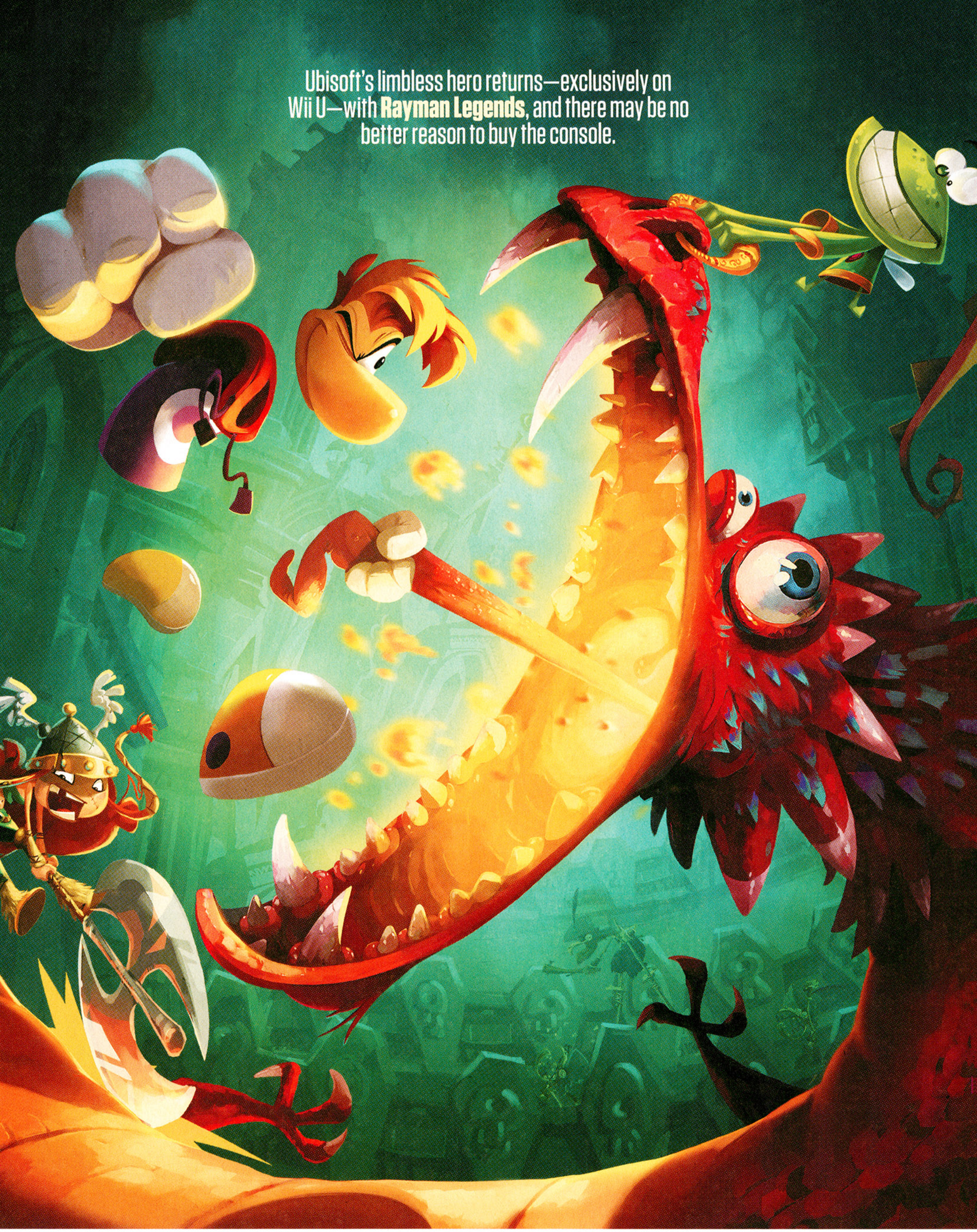
King Hippo Brodus Clay

Great Tiger Jinder Mahal

Bald Bull Big Show

Mr. Dream Mike Tyson

Ubisoft's limbless hero returns—exclusively on Wii U—with **Rayman Legends**, and there may be no better reason to buy the console.



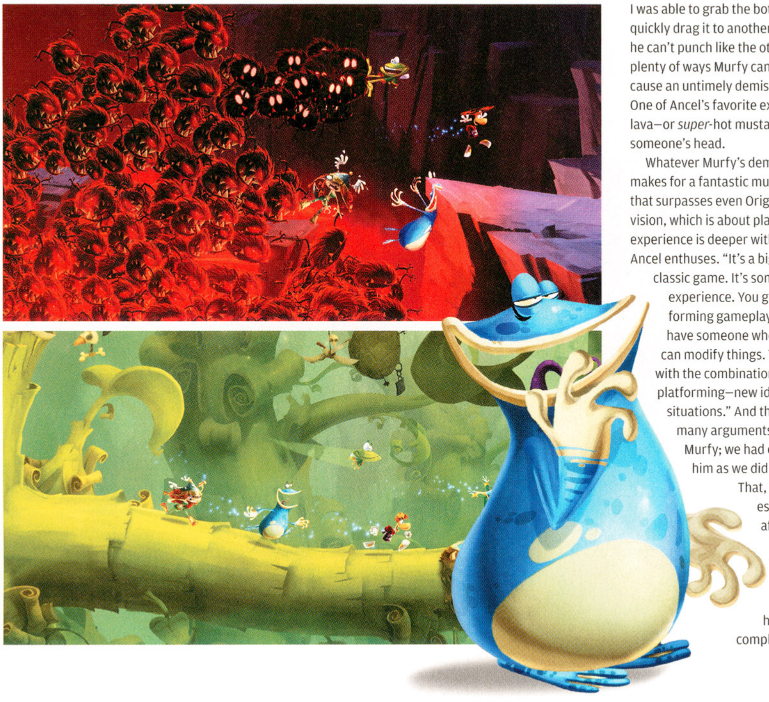
BY STEVEN THOMASON

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTPELLIER RELEASE: DECEMBER 2012

Wii U

STUFF *of* LEGENDS

IF YOU ASK US, one of the highlights of this most recent console generation has been the resurgence of the 2D platformer. It was a genre that seemed all but extinct just a few years ago, before many of platforming's biggest names—from Mario to Sonic—returned to their side-scrolling roots and helped players rediscover the timeless joy of running from left to right. Few games delivered a more potent dose of that joy than last year's Rayman Origins from acclaimed creative director Michel Ancel and his team at Ubisoft Montpellier. Now Ancel's group looks to keep the 2D fires burning on the next generation of consoles—and introduce some fresh ideas in the process—with Rayman Legends for Wii U.



AIR SUPPORT

At the foundation of this new game is everything that made Origins a platforming masterpiece: stunning hand-drawn visuals, expert level design, an infectious soundtrack, and multiplayer hijinks. But according to Ancel, "The big motivation for [Rayman Legends] was really the Wii U GamePad." Ubisoft Montpellier was one of the first outside studios to receive Wii U development kits, and Ancel's team immediately envisioned how a Rayman title might benefit from the controller. "The environment is very important in a platform game," he explains. "And we realized that the GamePad could be a great way to modify the environment in new and different ways."

Enter Murfy. The greenbottle fly with the ever-present (and slightly creepy) grin first appeared as a guide in Rayman 2: The Great Escape. His role in Legends is far more interesting. While up to four players lead Rayman and company through each level via Wii Remote controllers or Wii U Pro Controllers, a fifth player can manipulate their surroundings by controlling Murfy on the Wii U GamePad. The diminutive ally can perform a wide variety of helpful tasks, whether it's cutting ropes (via the touch screen) to lower platforms or turning a gear (via the gyroscope) to safely guide his friends through a spike-filled maze. That adds a collaborative element to the festivities, of course, but the person controlling Murfy can also cause plenty of mischief. When one player was about to snag a health bottle during our demo, for instance, I was able to grab the bottle with Murfy and quickly drag it to another player. And even though he can't punch like the other characters, there are plenty of ways Murfy can use the environment to cause an untimely demise for his fellow travelers. One of Ancel's favorite examples: scooping up lava—or *super*-hot mustard—and dumping it on someone's head.

Whatever Murfy's demeanor, his presence makes for a fantastic multiplayer experience that surpasses even Origins. "We have this big vision, which is about playing all together, and this experience is deeper with the Wii U GamePad," Ancel enthuses. "It's a big modifier on top of the classic game. It's something that changes the experience. You get the whole classic platforming gameplay, but on top of that you have someone who acts a bit like a god and can modify things. There's infinite potential with the combination of touch and traditional platforming—new ideas and completely new situations." And there are unlikely to be many arguments over who has to play as Murfy; we had every bit as much fun with him as we did the other characters.

That, frankly, came as a shock, especially given our deep affinity for the franchise's top-notch platforming. "What we think is interesting about the Murfy player is that he's doing something completely different from the other players," says level designer Chris McEntee. "You don't feel like you're stepping on each other's toes because he's not doing the things that Rayman wants to be doing."

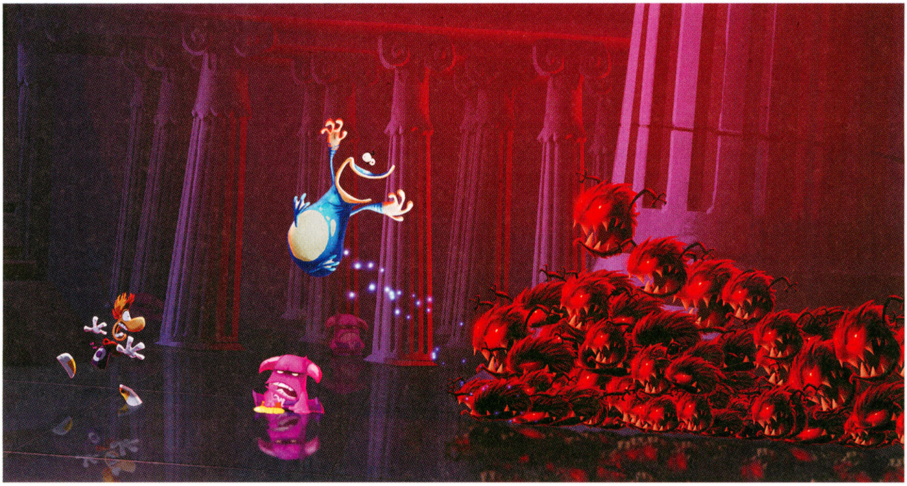
McEntee also stresses the importance of having Murfy as an onscreen avatar. "We want the player on the GamePad to feel like they have an identity in the game's world," he tells us. "That person is playing a character just as much as the guy next to him; he's not just a gimmick layered on top. It makes him feel like he's part of the experience."

Though Rayman Legends is intended for—and best enjoyed with—a bunch of friends sitting on the sofa, it does offer the option to play solo. In that case, you'll spend the vast majority of your time controlling Rayman or one of the other platforming heroes, and when you get to a section that *requires* Murfy's assistance, you'll temporarily switch to him while the AI takes the reins of your other character. We've yet to try this for ourselves, but the developers promise the AI will perform flawlessly to avoid frustration.

INTO THE OPEN

Ancel and company's changes to the Origins formula go beyond the addition of Murfy. "One thing we did quite early on in development is improve the classic platforming mechanics," recalls McEntee. "So for example, if you jump-kicked while you were running in Origins, you would almost stop in midair and drop straight down. Now when you jump-kick, you keep moving forward. Little tweaks like that help the game feel more fluid, which is sort of amazing because Rayman Origins already felt pretty fluid to begin with."

The overall structure has been revamped, as well. Unlike Origins, which featured a linear progression, Legends lets you travel to any of its five worlds right from the start. In explaining the reasons behind that change, McEntee points out, "Sometimes it's very frustrating when you get stuck on a particular level. When players are required to finish that level to continue the game, a lot of them will get frustrated and might put it down and say, "never mind.' We wanted to give people options. If you can't beat this level, maybe try a different world and come back another time." Ancel interjects, "That's very important, because we want everyone to experience all of these new ideas we've come up with."



Giving players that sort of freedom is easier when you're not trying to tell a big, overarching story. "Instead, we think of each world as a standalone 'legend' that tells its own mini story and has its own personality," shares Ancel. Likewise, each world highlights a particular gameplay mechanic and puts specific skills to the test. A Shaolin-inspired training area allows players to hone their various abilities—all of which are available from the get-go this time around—and offers basic tutorials as well as advanced challenges.

LEGENDS TOUR

During our visit to Ubisoft Montpellier, we had an opportunity to check out levels from four of the game's five worlds. The first takes place in the Medieval world and had previously been shown at E3. It opens in a lush jungle and eventually leads inside a sprawling castle filled with all sorts of deadly traps that Murfy must help his friends navigate. (To see it in action, go to rayman.ubi.com.)

Our next stop was the Olympus world and a level called Swarmed & Dangerous. The name refers to the dozens of ferocious shadow creatures with razor-sharp teeth that chase Rayman and company through the level relentlessly. Murfy can hold back a few of the creatures at a time, but that's effective for only so long before their numbers overwhelm him. More often than not, you'll have to lose a swarm by using its own momentum against it. Case in point: at one juncture we dropped off a cliff and quickly came to a stop on the narrow ledge below while our pursuers sailed overhead and into a pool of lava. You can also kill the monsters by triggering fireworks littered about, but the next swarm is never far behind.

The stage culminates with a particularly massive group of the bloodthirsty critters chasing you into a palace, where you have to jump over a little purple minion dutifully scrubbing the marble floor—oblivious to his imminent demise. Like its predecessor, Legends is filled with these sorts of humorous touches. When the group's path is blocked by a massive brute wielding a hammer and shield, for instance, Murfy can tickle the foe's armpit to make him drop his guard. It really feels as if you're playing a cartoon—and a pretty awesome one at that.

Once we'd caught our breath after the intensity of Swarmed & Dangerous, Ancel showed us some early concepts for other parts of the Olympus world. In one level, Murfy will hold a magic shield over the heads of the other characters to protect them from Zeus's lightning bolts. Ancel points to that as

MAD MAESTRO

As stunning as the visuals were in Rayman Origins, the soundtrack was an equally important part of what made that game such a great experience. Christophe Héral, the man responsible for most of that brilliantly unorthodox music, is now hard at work composing tunes for Rayman Legends. Graciously, he set aside a few moments in his busy schedule to chat with us.

NINTENDO POWER When composing the soundtrack for a Rayman game, what are your sources of inspiration?

CHRISTOPHE HÉRAL First I start with the concept art. It's important to understand the world that is being created and to get a feel for the mood of that world. Is it bright and happy? Dark and scary? What do the enemies look like? We have so many amazing artists that it's easy to get a lot of inspiration from the concepts they create.

The music in Rayman Origins—and now Legends—is a bit unconventional, reflecting the same sense of manic whimsy that players see on the screen. How closely do you work with the development team to capture that?

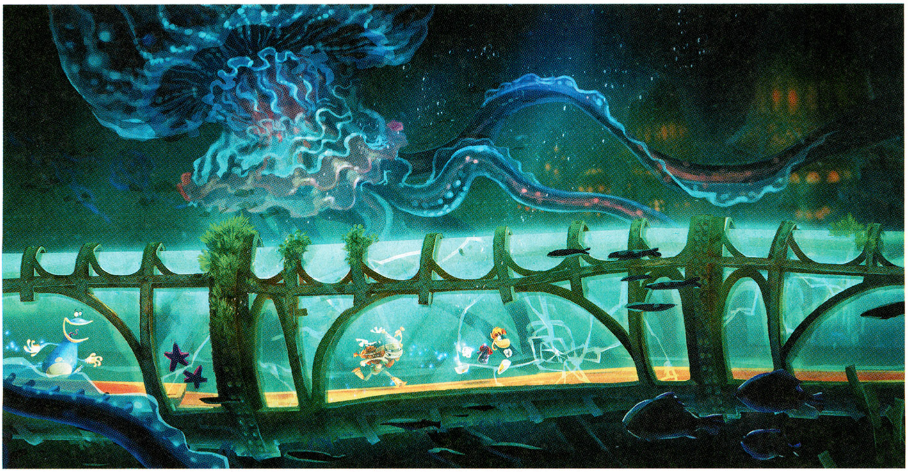
I sit down with Michel and talk in more detail about the environment and the gameplay. It's important to know how the landscapes will come together and what will happen in the background. However, it's probably most important to understand the gameplay. For that, we also meet with the level designers to make sure we know all the details about each level. Is it a chase, what kind of elements will you face, is it a fight, are you jumping on hard surfaces, are you floating a lot? These are all the things we discuss together to make sure we get the right mood for the music. It's a very collaborative process. The music is evolving as the game evolves.

How did the idea come about to do the musical "Platform Hero" stages for Rayman Legends? And are there any special considerations you have to keep in mind while composing the tracks for these stages?

I believe it actually started as a video. We were making an internal video that showed hardcore players playing Rayman and enjoying the fast-paced precision needed for some of our maps. We were using this rock-'n'-roll song for the scene and kept adjusting the level design to match the music to make the video better. By the end, the whole level matched the music and we all had so much fun playing it. So we started to listen to a lot of different kinds of music. We talked about the rhythm and the tempo and different styles we could use. I made an initial proposition and again, I worked very closely with Michel to make sure everything was right. We tweaked the music, we tweaked the level design, and went back and forth, and continued to improve the result. Finally, it all came together and the first musical map was revealed at E3. Now we are working on lots of new musical maps. It's a different approach than composing other music for Rayman. Now, I always have to think in terms of gameplay—jumps, slides, punches—and the rhythm for the player. And most of all, we always have to make sure it's a fun song to play!

Why did you decide to mix in licensed tracks for some of the music stages? And how do you go about choosing which songs to include?

The most interesting part about the licensed tracks is that we integrate a touch of Rayman in each composition. Therefore, when choosing the songs, we want to make sure they are very recognizable, because we then take that song and rearrange it for the world of Rayman. For example, everyone knows "Eye of the Tiger," but when you hear it in Rayman Legends, it may take a minute before you recognize it. We did this beautiful flamenco version of the song that changes the feeling of it quite a bit. It fits our world much better than the original. The original would have felt a bit forced and out of place. It's too serious. Everything we do must be hilarious, especially the music!



[Above] Feast your eyes on the first-ever screen from Rayman Legends's gorgeous underwater world.

indicative of the unique collaboration between his art and design teams. He shows us an amusing piece of concept art with a finger emerging from the clouds—inspired by the hand of God in *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*—and zapping a sheep with lightning. "It's very interesting, because this was not done specifically for the shield thing," he recalls. "We came up with the shield idea and needed something coming from the sky. Then we remembered we had this piece of concept art, and everything came together. Other times, we'll start with an artist's vision and build game-design elements on top of that. So it works in both directions."

From there we got to demo one of the game's musical stages—Orchestral Chaos—in the Magic Beanstalk world. This new stage type requires players to jump, swing, and punch to the beat of the music, earning it the nickname "Platform Hero" within the studio. As we traversed a giant beanstalk in this particular stage, thorn-covered vines closed in all around us, leaving very little room for error. About halfway through the level, we dropped below the clouds and into the middle of a violent storm. As torrential rain poured down, lightning strikes occasionally shrouded our heroes in shadow. It was an impressive sight to behold.

The final game will include eight to ten of these music stages, with at least one per world. Some will feature original tracks by the game's award-winning composer, Christophe Héral, whose previous works include Rayman Origins and Beyond Good & Evil. For others, Héral has remixed licensed tracks, infusing them with a distinct Rayman flavor, to hilarious effect. We got to hear "Eye of the Tiger" done in a flamenco style with gibberish vocals and a little kazoo mixed in, followed by a luau version of "Woo Hoo" from the 5.6.7.8's.

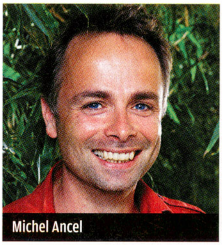
Our visit concluded with an exclusive sneak peak at what the developers have in store for the Underwater world, which is still very early in development. As Ancel describes it, "This world is going to feature sort of a Jules Verne-inspired environment, but the story will be more James Bond. There's a secret underwater base and you have to infiltrate it. So it's really about infiltration, which is a new theme for Rayman." The levels here play heavily with light and shadow, requiring players to remain cloaked or risk being spotted—and fried—by the base's security system. Ancel took us through a number of sample rooms, including one in which players must avoid a sentry's spotlight and another where they have to swim between glowing jellyfish. Some stages will also require Murfy to manipulate light sources or create shadows in various ways—like holding a discarded robot head in front of a rotating floodlight—to create safe areas for the other players. "The rhythm of these levels will be a bit different from Rayman Origins," says McEntee. "It's not constantly full steam ahead, run, run, run. It's really more about understanding the environment, knowing where it's safe, and getting in sync with the shadows. It's cool to sometimes break up the rhythm from just constant platforming into something a little bit different."

"And the idea isn't only to have the stealth part of the base," he adds. "There will be sections with lots of traps and electrified water and all of these kinds of things. You'll be platforming over mechanical objects, then you climb into an air vent and suddenly you're in a dark room that you have to navigate." Ancel sums it up thusly: "We didn't want to make another underwater world with just new fishes."

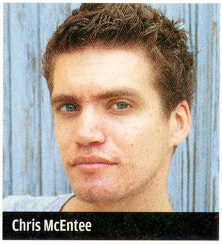
That attitude was evident throughout our time with Rayman Legends. Though the game is following Origins by just over a year, nothing about it feels phoned-in. On the contrary, everything we played was bristling with creativity, and the GamePad functionality is among the best we've seen thus far. A certain mustachioed plumber has his work cut out for him if he wants to hold onto his platforming crown.

French Connection

To get the full scoop on Rayman Legends, we traveled to the site of the game's development—a converted 400-year-old villa located in a quiet neighborhood at the heart of Montpellier, France. After checking out the game, we sat down for an extended conversation with Rayman creator Michel Ancel (a legend in his own right) and level designer Chris McEntee.



Michel Ancel



Chris McEntee

NINTENDO POWER **I'm wondering what came first. Did you want to make a new Rayman and decided that Wii U was a good fit, or vice versa?**

MICHEL ANCEL To be honest, we were on Wii U very early—even for Origins. [Looks at Chris McEntee] I bet you didn't know that! [Laughs]

We did not know exactly when Nintendo would release the system, but we started making Origins for Wii U. [At that point,] we thought Wii U would come out a lot earlier. We worked very closely with Nintendo [on Wii U] early on, giving them feedback on the various prototypes.

When we finished Origins, it was time to start thinking about Wii U again, because [the hardware] was nearly complete. So to answer your question, we wanted to make a Rayman game and started to explore how we could make it interesting using Wii U.

So was the Wii U exclusivity born from the fact that you can do all of this interesting new stuff with the GamePad that's not possible on the other consoles?

CHRIS MCENTEE Well, technically we could do it with SmartGlass [for Xbox 360] and with the Vita being linked to the PlayStation 3. The possibility could be there, but we chose to really focus on Wii U specifically because it has a special toolset, and because everyone that buys it gets what they need to play the game.

MA Right.

CM We don't want to have the player dependent on other technology that they have to purchase to make sure they can play the full experience. Here you buy the Wii U system, you buy the game, and you can experience all of the content without extras. And we didn't want to give somebody half of the experience just for the sake of getting it out on another console. We want the player to get everything that we have to offer them from this game.

MA And I think this is where Nintendo is really out in front of things. The technology inside the controller is quite a bit more advanced than what people might think. It's really responsive. The response time is crazy, in fact, and I think the competitors will need some time to [get their solutions] this responsive.

It's crazy because the game is running in full HD [on the television], we are streaming another picture on the GamePad screen, and it's still 60 frames per second. And the latency on the controller is just 1/60 of a second, so it's one frame late. It's crazy; it's so fast. It's almost instant. That's why it responds so well. So it can be used as a real game-design thing.

Can you talk about the inspiration and the beginnings of the Murfy stuff on the GamePad? And did you experiment with any other ideas for the controller?

MA We had two or three big ideas at the beginning, but that's the one that came out on top. The other ideas were—for example, because there are a lot of things happening on the screen, we thought maybe it would be nice to have interactions with zoomed-in parts of the environment. It would be something that's too small [to see] on the TV screen, but it's zoomed in on the GamePad and you can interact with it—like contextual things such as playing with the environment or characters. Maybe you can have funny interactions, but it was superficial. It was a gimmick, almost.

CM Because of course when you're working with a new controller like this, all of the first ideas that come out are the most gimmicky and silly. You look at iPad games and what are they doing and everything else, but what we really had to work hard on was to say, "Yes, there might be 15 little ideas that on their own could be a cool puzzle game or something interesting for a smaller experience. But how can we bring all of this into the realm of a platformer?" So the player can manipulate objects and things, and he can slice this, and he can rotate the environment by turning a crank, but we really had to try and make it fit into the experience and not just be a series of random things that he can suddenly do out of nowhere. And that's where the character comes into play, because it justifies all of your actions. You're not just seeing a magical wheel, and then you touch it and suddenly it's rotated. You feel like there's a guy holding it and he's making it move, and it solidifies your experience and your part in the world that you're playing in.

Was there anything from Origins that you felt like you wanted to improve upon?

MA Yeah, I think the basics of the game. You know, Origins is really intense and sometimes maybe too intense. When you play a lot—[exhales deeply]—

you feel like that. It's a lot of action, action, action. The pacing in [Rayman Legends] is really interesting, and the structure of the levels is a bit different. We tried to have levels where you kind of have a pause and focus on exploration. And there are times where you can continue with the flow or you can explore further in some specific areas and enter hidden, alternative rooms, and they don't have the same pacing as the "main path." The pacing is different, so it can be a puzzle; it can be whatever. So I think that's the thing we learned—to not always have everything at the maximum in terms of speed and intensity. And it's nice with the Wii U controller, because we have those different ways of playing.

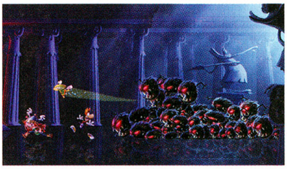
Another thing I really wanted to improve on is the readability of the game. We've not fully realized this; we're still improving things with the artists. But the new rendering engine is not only about lights and things like that; more than anything we tried to make the picture easier to read. So we are working with the artists to emphasize what's part of the playfield and—

CM —the rim lights, the dynamic fog—all of that helps to give everything in the background a consistent washed-out effect that makes the playfield stand out a lot more. Maybe there are fewer objects in the foreground obscuring the view. It's really just making things more clear: this is where you're playing, and these are the objects you can interact with.

MA We are still working on it. It's not perfect today, but that's something we have in mind: readability and making sure things are as clear as possible. Sometimes it's a bit impossible, because you have so many players at the same time doing so many different things. Of course, it's part of the game to maybe lose the focus on things, but we tried to control this as much as possible—not having too many interactive elements at the same time and making things clearer.

CM One thing in the level structure that's changed as well—in Rayman Origins we had a page and a door you go through, next page, door you go through, and each level was built of about four or five pages, and then you get to the end room and you finish. And now we try to eliminate those separations as much as possible to have one continuous experience. There are still checkpoints, but it doesn't feel broken and fractured. You feel like you're just going through this one-level experience, and only when we really want the feeling of going inside of a cave and emerging because it gives a cool sense of exploration or something do we break it. But for the most part, we didn't want to limit ourselves with a system where every level is five of these pages, and that's the structure. It's like, this level can be longer than this one, this one can be shorter but a more memorable experience. And we can put in breaks if we need them. But rather than saying that each level is standard, it's more that the overall experience should be standardized, and we can break it apart where we want to and make it interesting.

When Origins came out, we honestly didn't think 2D platformers could look much better. Legends is proving us wrong. Are the improved visuals primarily the result of enhancements to the engine or does the Wii U hardware play a part?



MA What surprises me with Wii U is that we don't have many technical problems. It's really running very well, in fact. We're not obliged to constantly optimize things. Even on the PS3 and Xbox 360 versions [of Origins], we had some fill-rate issues and things like that. So it's partly us—we improved the engine—but I think the console is quite powerful. Surprisingly powerful. And there's a lot of memory. You can really have huge textures, and it's crazy because sometimes the graphic artist—we build our textures in very high-definition. They could be used in a movie. Then we compress them, but sometimes they forget to do the compression and it still works! [Laughs] So yeah, it's quite powerful. It's hard sometimes when you're one of the first developers because it's up to you to come up with solutions to certain problems. But the core elements of the console are surprisingly powerful.

CM And because we're developing [Rayman Legends] exclusively for Wii U, we don't have to worry about cross-platform optimization.

MA We can push what the console can do; push it to its limits. And of course, we have a new lighting engine. In fact, the game engine for Origins was mostly just classic sprites in HD, but now we can light them and add shadows and all these things. So there is some technical innovation with the engine itself.

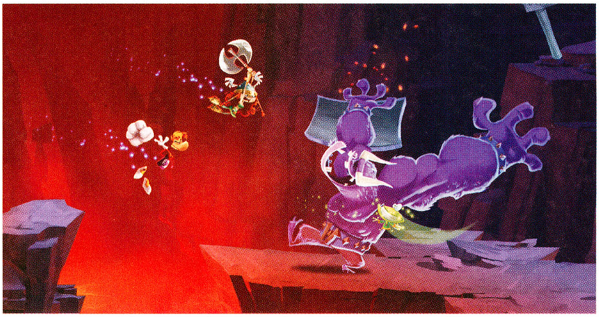
In Origins, you had the Moskito shooter stages. Do those return or is there anything similar in Legends?

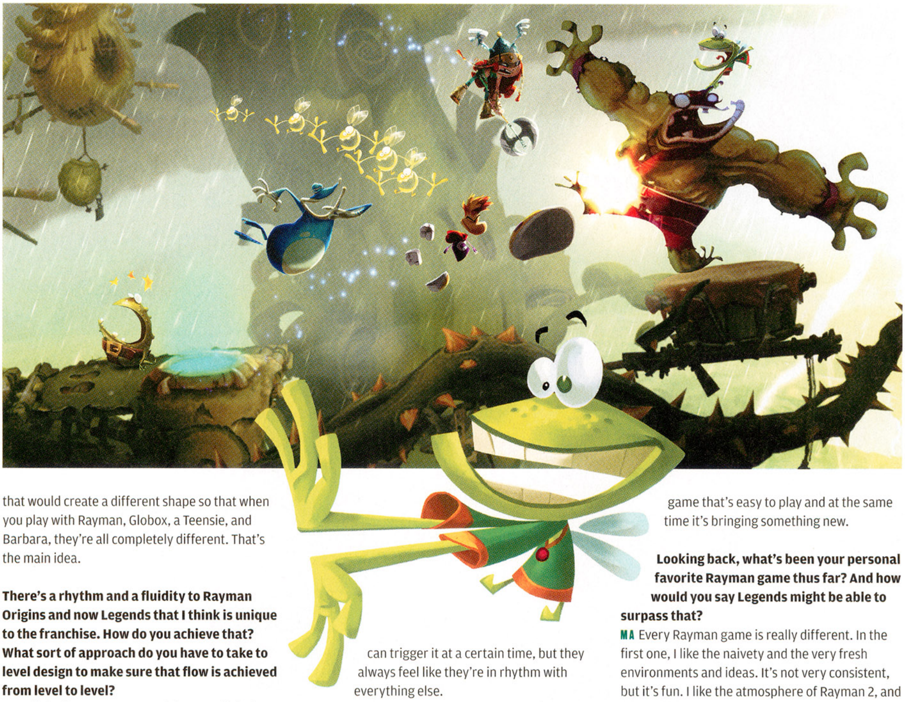
MA For me, that was really there to break up the normal experience a little bit; to offer players something completely different. But with the varied gameplay in Legends, we already have that feeling. To me, it was a bit too much to bring back the shooter stages on top of that.

Can you talk about the new character, Barbara, and how she came about?

MA We wanted each world to have its own character that you can unlock. She's the one in the Medieval world, where you have all these castles and very raw mechanisms like axes. So she's really a reference to barbarians and that kind of environment. Also, we really wanted to make a character

[Below] Murfy may not be able to attack foes directly, but he wields an even greater power: tickling.





that would create a different shape so that when you play with Rayman, Globox, a Teensie, and Barbara, they're all completely different. That's the main idea.

There's a rhythm and a fluidity to Rayman Origins and now Legends that I think is unique to the franchise. How do you achieve that? What sort of approach do you have to take to level design to make sure that flow is achieved from level to level?

CM I think—for me, anyway—a big part of it is that we have this game engine that allows us to play while we build. We don't have to constantly save, open the game, play it, go back, and rebuild. And then it really just comes down to play-testing, and that's what we do all day long when we're making these levels. I create a section, test it, then ask, 'Do I have the fluidity there? Does it feel great? Is there a rhythm?' Of course, Michel is one of the best of us to immediately spot when there's a good rhythm in something and when there's not. So we come up [to his office] to review something, and he'll just play it and go like, 'It's too stale. We need to change it up a bit—do a drop, and then a jump, and then a roll and an attack here.' He really understands that there has to be a variety of input to make something with a good flow.

Then we have gameplay elements with these bumpers that push you in a direction to tell you to keep going. We don't always force the player, but we guide them through level design to make sure they know where they're going, and we make sure that when you get there that there's a flow to it. Not every player gets the flow because sometimes it requires a high level of expertise, but I'm sure you know that when you are really doing a speed run of a level that there's just so much flow in these levels. Everything is synced. Even the moving platforms are moving in rhythm. They're all synced to the same metronome. Of course, we can trigger it at a certain time, but they always feel like they're in rhythm with everything else.

Why do you think 2D platformers have made such a strong comeback in recent years?

MA I think there are a lot of reasons. One may be that people want different things, and they've played 3D games for a long time so they feel like 2D is refreshing. But that explanation would only suffice if it had been for one or two years and it's been a lot longer—the trend is continuing. So yeah, I think there are a lot of reasons. Another is that there's a larger audience playing games now, and 2D is easier to understand. And for example, with Legends it's easier to play with four people at the same time. If it were 3D, we would have to split the screen or have some constraints on the camera.

I think that one thing, too, is that 2D games can be connected to a certain golden age of gaming. Super Mario is really one of the big franchises that represent the history of video games. So it's like going back to one of grandma's old recipes. [Laughs] Maybe you've been eating a lot of new and different foods, but you still want to go back to that once in a while. I've personally been playing a lot of retro games lately. It's nice, but at the same time, you realize how much games have evolved. So even if it's 2D, it's not exactly the same as the 2D games we played a long time ago. Developers have learned along the way and hardware advancements allow us to do new things. So it's refreshing, and I think a lot of people like that it's a game that's easy to play and at the same time it's bringing something new.

Looking back, what's been your personal favorite Rayman game thus far? And how would you say Legends might be able to surpass that?

MA Every Rayman game is really different. In the first one, I like the naivety and the very fresh environments and ideas. It's not very consistent, but it's fun. I like the atmosphere of Rayman 2, and we are trying to put that atmosphere in Legends now because we have this opportunity with its epic touch. We have more epic music...so we're really trying to retrieve that part of Rayman 2. I didn't work directly on Rayman 3, which was more about gags and lots of humor. But that's something I'd love to put in this game, too. It's nice to include the kinds of gags that maybe more-mature players could see as references and find funny. But I honestly don't have a favorite Rayman game because each of them was done in a different period with a different mind and spirit. The funny thing, though, is that we are working with guys who worked on all of the different games. Even some of the guys who worked on the first Rayman have come back.

I know this probably comes up all the time and you must be sick of it, but I think I'm required by international law to inquire about Beyond Good & Evil 2.

MA [Laughs] I think the Wii U GamePad could be used nicely as a camera.... [Laughs] No, to be honest, I'm really focused on Rayman Legends right now. I'm surprised how much of our energy it's taking because I expected it to be an easier game to make. But because of the Wii U GamePad, we're really focusing on this one. I can't talk about what the next game will be for us because it's not set in stone yet, so I guess I don't have a better answer for you. Sorry! [Laughs]

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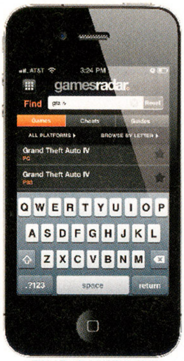
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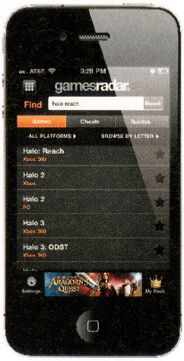
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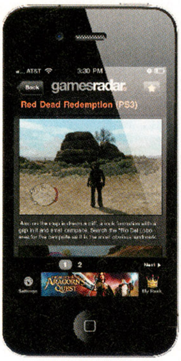
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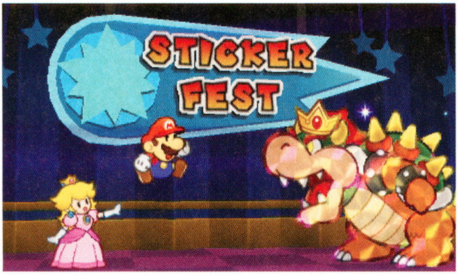
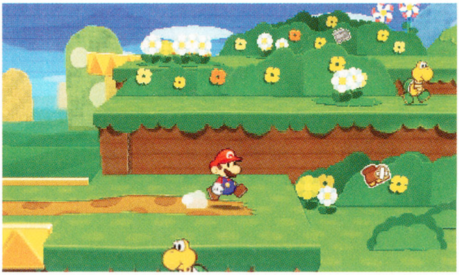
STUCK ON YOU

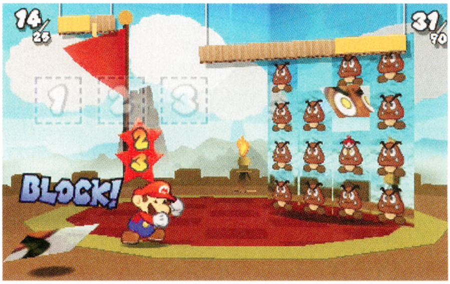
Princess Peach has gotten herself into another sticky situation. Get back in the RPG fold with **Paper Mario: Sticker Star**.

BY **PHIL THEOBALD**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS** RELEASE: **NOVMEBER 2012** **N3DS**

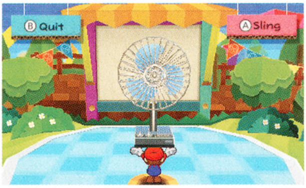






It's hard to believe that it's been more than five years since the last Paper Mario adventure. Although the series began its life as an action RPG, its third installment, Super Paper Mario for Wii, was more of a traditional platformer (albeit it with some light RPG elements). Paper Mario: Sticker Star returns the series to its role-playing roots, and is looking to be the most Paper-y Mario yet.

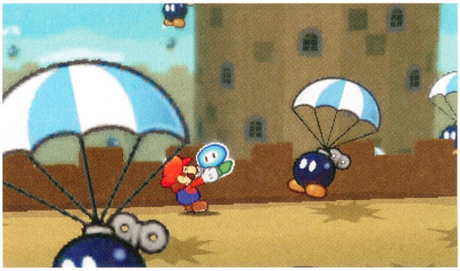
The action begins on the night of Sticker Fest, an annual celebration in the Mushroom Kingdom where the paper-thin citizens gather to watch the Sticker Comet from the sky. It is said that a wish made on the comet is likely to come true. As is often the case, Bowser and his army arrive on the scene to disrupt the party. Wanting the comet for his own, Bowser lunges towards it, but as soon as he touches the precious chunk of space debris, it shatters and its pieces fly all over the kingdom. In the ensuing chaos, a crown sticker lands on Bowser's head, transforming him into a sparkly sticker and making him more powerful than ever. With his new strength, he kidnaps Princess Peach (surprise!), and runs off.



Mario immediately mounts a rescue effort, and soon comes in contact with Kersti, a flying crown who also happens to be the caretaker of the Royal Stickers, wish-granting elements of the comet (and, of course, the kind that stuck to Bowser). Kersti decides to accompany Mario on his quest, and she proves very useful in teaching our hero how to make proper use of the many stickers that are scattered throughout the world.

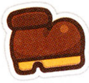
Like the title suggests, stickers are the driving force behind this game, and it'll take plenty of them to save Peach. The adhesive goodies are stuck all over the place, so pay close attention to your surroundings. If you see one, just walk up to it and use the A Button to peel it off and place it in your album. You'll need a healthy supply of stickers, as they're what you use during combat to pull off techniques and attacks. Running low on stickers in the heat of battle will lead to an early demise. Thankfully, if finding them becomes too much of a chore, you can purchase them from one of the game's shops by parting with hard-earned gold coins. Just don't get overly enthusiastic with your collection—your album holds a limited number, so keep only the stickers that you really want (although your album will gain more pages as you play).

Battles play out much like those in past Paper Mario titles. They're

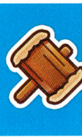


STICK AND MOVE

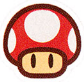
There is a plethora of stickers to score in Sticker Star, and you'll have to do quite a bit of experimentation to determine which work best against particular enemies. Here are some of the ones you'll employ early in the game.



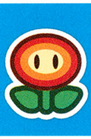
JUMP What's Mario without jumping? This basic move lets you stomp a single foe, and a skilled player can use it to bounce multiple times. Just don't attempt it against spiked enemies.



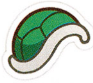
HAMMER This is another common attack. Although it can't be used against airborne creatures, it does generate a shockwave that causes damage to a group of enemies.



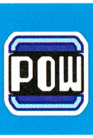
MUSHROOM Feeling low on health? You'll want to keep a few Mushroom stickers in your album at all times—they're perfect for restoring your hearts after you've taken damage.



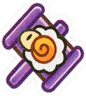
FIRE FLOWER This item is beyond familiar to Mario veterans. The fireballs Mario throws when using this item can strike multiple targets. Paper enemies don't have a chance against flames.



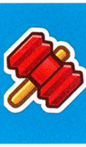
SHELL Jumping on a Koopa Shell sends it sliding across the screen, damaging all enemies in its path. Of course, it won't affect anyone who happens to be flying.



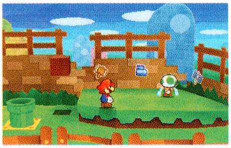
POW BLOCK When you need to unleash a lot of damage, bust out the POW Block. Not only will smashing it damage all ground-based foes, but it also has a chance to crumple them (Paper Mario's version of a stun).



BAAHAMMER Easily identified by the lovable sheep that decorates it, the Baahammer causes your enemies to drift off to sleep. Although this leaves them open to further attacks, they also regain small bits of health while they slumber.

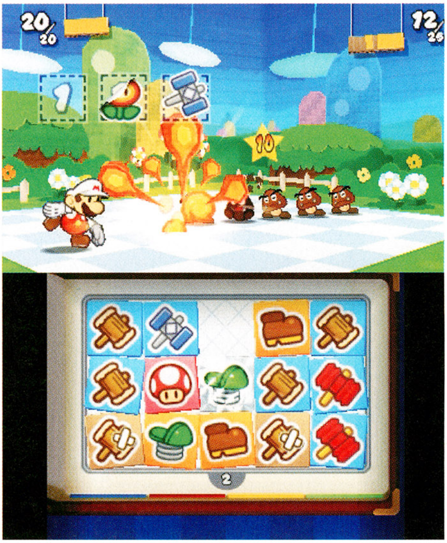


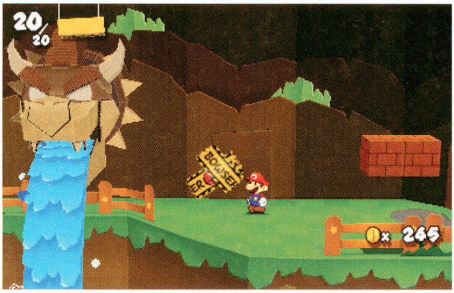
EEKHAMMER Although it looks like a squeaky toy, the Eekhammer is more dangerous than its appearance might suggest. It functions much like the normal hammer, but you can swing it multiple times.

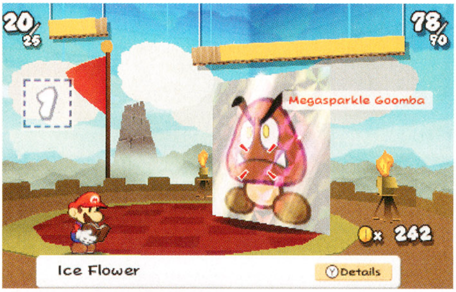


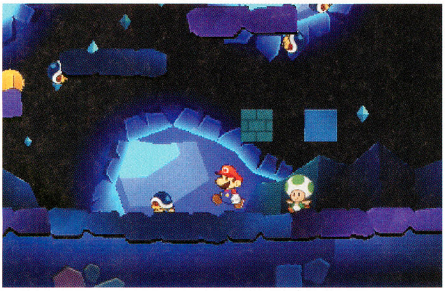
turn-based, but with quick-reflex tests mixed in. To attack, you must first choose a sticker from your album. Each one has a corresponding move that you'll execute, such as a jump or a hammer attack. Tapping the A Button right before your attack is launched will inflict extra damage on your target. Likewise, when an enemy counterattacks, hitting the button just prior to the moment of impact will lessen your pain. Pay close attention to your stickers as you select them—their efficacy is based on their condition. If you have a worn-out sticker, the attack from it won't be as powerful as the attack from a mint-condition source. There are also special stickers that have boosted stats. These shiny and flashy varieties provide extra punch, so save them for battles in which you need a little extra help.

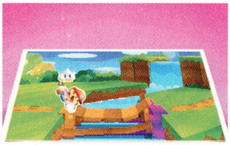
Another way to tip the odds in your favor is by playing the Battle Spinner before a fight. This slot machine-style minigame consumes some of the coins that you've earned in battle or found during your journey, but by matching two or more symbols, you can earn bonus items and the opportunity to take more stickers into the fray. Having multiple attacks to use during your











turn lets you tear through your competition.

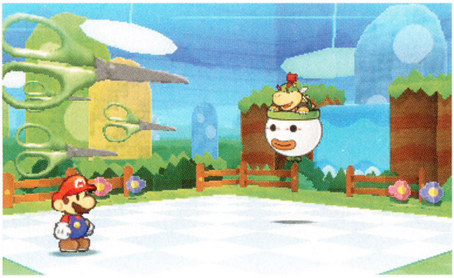
Of course, sticker-gathering and fighting isn't all you can do in the game. This paper version of the Mushroom Kingdom is represented by an overworld map, with the town of Decalburg as the starting hub. You'll probably find yourself returning here frequently to buy and sell stickers and to chat up the local Toad populace. From Decalburg you wander off to new worlds, which are broken down into multiple levels just like in a traditional Mario platformer. Each world contains enemies to fight, stickers to find, and puzzles to solve. In World 1-3, for example, a large waterspout in the shape of Bowser's head blocks your progress. Only by finding a way to turn it off can you proceed.

The ultimate goal of each stage is to collect the comet piece at the end to help reconstruct the Sticker Comet. Occasionally, you will stumble across odd, three-dimensional objects like scissors, a faucet, and a trumpet (drolly categorized as Things in the game). These unique finds can be transformed into stickers and used to solve puzzles. Need a powerful gust of wind? Why not turn that fan you found into a useful sticker?

Sometimes important parts of the world will be missing (or stolen). At one point Bowser Jr. tears a bridge away from the background and crumples it up. It's easy enough to reclaim the scrap, but returning it to its rightful place requires a special technique known as Paperization. With a press of the Y Button, your immediate surroundings will become two-dimensional and fall down like a piece of paper lying on a table. Mario and Kersti hover above the page, allowing Mario to place something (such as the bridge) on the background. When you return the setting to normal, the added object becomes an integral part of the scene.

Paper Mario: Sticker Star does a great job of playing with its pulpy premise. Not only does the entire world look as through it's built out of construction paper and cardboard (the diorama-inspired level design also looks outstanding in 3D), but many steps are taken to emphasize the arts-and-craft-project feel. A bridge might be folded up like an accordion and sealed with a sticker. Peeling the sticker away causes the paper to realistically bounce upward before settling down as a usable path. The paper characters can be blown around, folded, and crumpled, all of which can be used against you during battle. Some enemies roll themselves up into a cone, preventing you from jumping on them. Others fold themselves like a card, resulting in double the enemies. The first world's boss is a Goomba that combines with a troupe of his minions to form a giant Goomba with Megasparkle strength thanks to his glittery-sticker form. There are other amusing paper touches, like the fact that Koopa Troopas fold up into their shells origami-style and the way enemies are reduced to a pile of ashes after being hit with fire attacks.

As is the case with most of Mario's RPG adventures, Sticker Star is pretty humorous. The paper nature of the characters and environments is frequently used for gags, and the dialogue is consistently clever. It makes an already enjoyable game even more fun. Our childhood sticker collections may have been lost when we threw away our Trapper Keepers decades ago, but we're looking forward to returning to the hobby this fall.

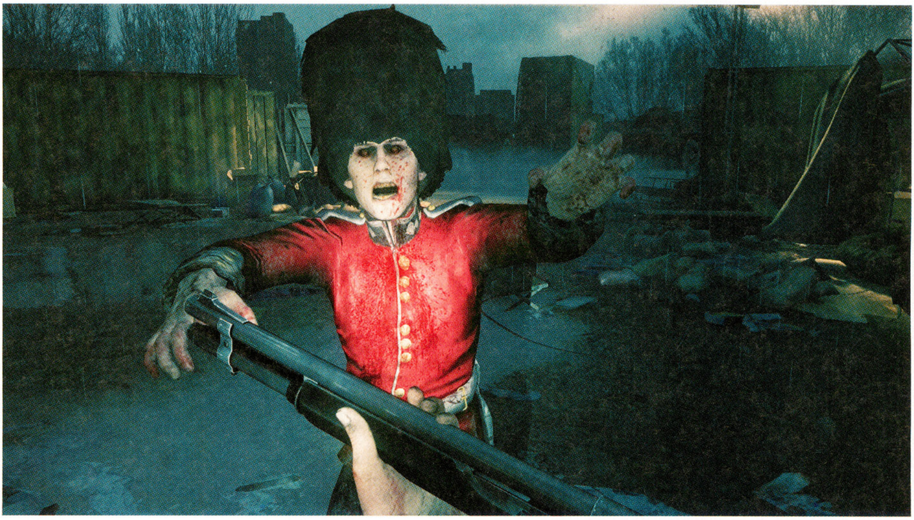


To Live and Die in London

Ubisoft puts *survival* back into the survival-horror genre with the Mature-rated Wii U launch title **ZombiU**.

BY **JUSTIN CHENG**

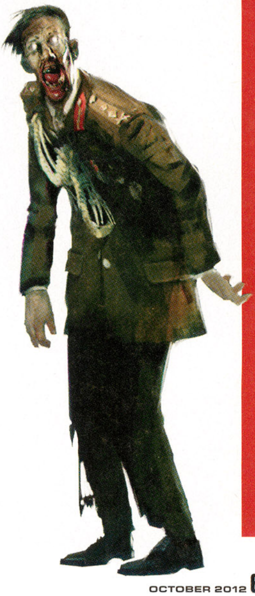
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER** RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012** **Wii U**

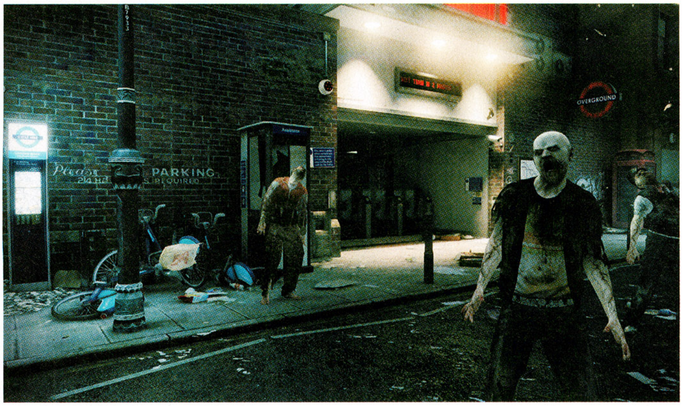


The zombie apocalypse began with the Rabbids. Those loony lagomorphs have become a fixture at Ubisoft, but after the release of Rabbids Go Home for Wii, a core group at the studio was looking to do something different. International brand manager Loïc Gounon elaborates on the new undertaking: "I think we were six or eight people at the very beginning. We began in 2010, and then we had one or two months making some really weird concepts, and we didn't really know what we were doing. And then we rapidly decided to do [a first-person shooter]. We had this prototype, White Rabbit, which was about shooting white rabbits with guns. That was not accepted. [Laughs]" Jean-Philippe "JP" Caro, gameplay director for the Mature-rated ZombiU, puts it less delicately: "We worked on Rabbids for six years. Imagine 'Bwah, BWAH!' for six years. [Laughs] It was like being in hell. [Laughs] So of course you want something like a shotgun. We were at that point, and we did it."

That initial White Rabbit idea evolved into Killer Freaks from Outer Space, a fast-paced, over-the-top first-person shooter in which the earth is invaded by little green gremlinlike aliens. Many who saw the game at E3 2011 were intrigued, but the folks at Ubisoft Montpellier started recognizing flaws with the game they designed for the Wii U system and its accompanying Wii U GamePad controller. Caro explains, "It was hard for people to [get used to] the system with two screens because old players are used to watching only the TV screen. So now they have to watch two screens at the same time, and if you make a crazy shooter, a really fast hardcore shooter, it was not working because no one was watching the GamePad screen." Gounon recalls, "We were thinking, 'This Killer Freaks, the game is a bit arcadey, the controller is not yet well integrated, so what can we do?'"

Some brainstorming was in order. Caro and ZombiU art director Florent Sacré—who have been working together since 2003's Beyond Good & Evil—took a week away from the office to come up with a new concept that would address these concerns. Their solution? Zombies. (Or rather, *infected*; the developers point out that this apocalyptic scenario is the result of a second Black Plague, in which only five



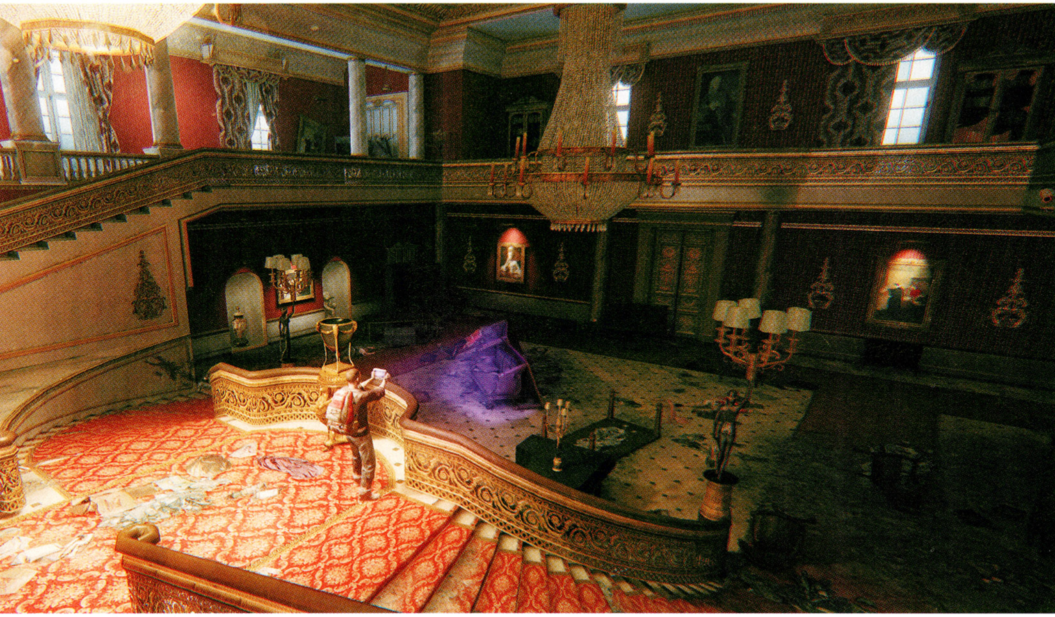


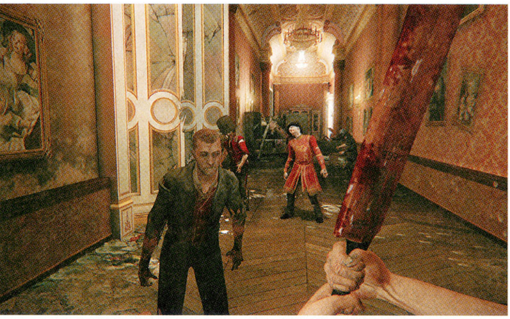
percent of the population hasn't been transformed into monsters.) Not only are zombies slow-moving opponents—which allows players to get acclimated to the dual-screen gameplay—but the London-based zombie-apocalypse setting (see the "London Calling" sidebar) also allowed the developers to utilize the GamePad in a clever way: as a survival kit. The tools you need to help you stay alive—weapons, maps, scanner, etc.—are right there on the GamePad. "If you play with the survival kit, you will survive," says Caro. "That's it. That's the rule. There are no other rules."

THE THICK OF IT

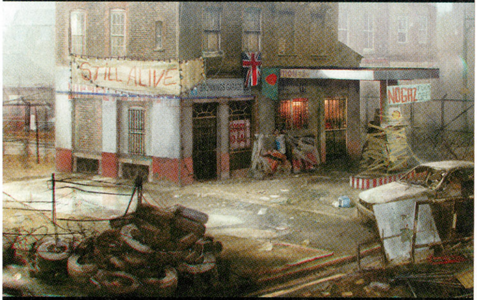
Unfortunately for me, I didn't follow that rule as closely as I should have when I played the demo, set in Buckingham Palace. The level begins with the player-controlled plague survivor—who was purposely designed to be an everyman—standing in a hallway in the palace. The first thing I do is pick up an M1 carbine lying on the ground next to some dead zombies. As I do not have a lot of ammo for either my newly acquired rifle or my handgun (just two of the 15 weapons in the game), I hold L on the GamePad to bring up the scanner, allowing me to see hidden items on the corpses. It's a zombie apocalypse, after all, so I have to grab everything I can. The scanner is also equipped with a blacklight that reveals hidden messages. One such communiqué is a series of arrows pointing toward a side room in which there's a ladder leading up to an opened vent. As I'm about to crawl into the air duct, however, a zombie grabs my leg and drags me through to the room on the other side of the vent.

Against a single foe, your best bet is the cricket bat: there's no risk of wasting precious bullets, and using a melee weapon means no gunshots that can draw the attention of any other infected in the vicinity. (These zombies are drawn to both sounds and light, so you can, for instance, throw a flare to distract them.) Plus, Caro points out, the cricket bat gives you a sense of sweet revenge: "As you are playing as this weak [person], you cannot do anything. We wanted the player to feel the strength of beating a zombie with a cricket bat.... 'This time you die!' you say. 'This time it's you! I kill *you*!'





LONDON CALLING



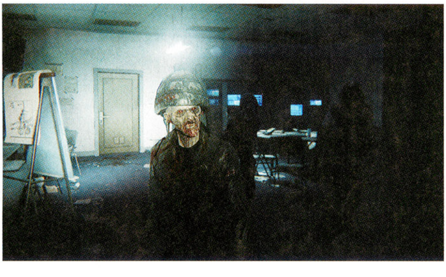
London, England, is certainly no stranger to the zombie apocalypse—after all, there's stuff like the film *28 Days Later* and the British TV miniseries *Dead Set*, both of which helped inspire ZombiU creative leads JP Caro and Florent Sacré. But why would a studio based in Montpellier, France, set a game in London? International brand manager Loïc Gounon explains: "We started in London with Killer Freaks...so we decided to keep London for ZombiU. Most of the zombie games take place in the US, especially in shopping malls.... It might be exotic for American people to go play in another city. And everybody knows London, and the Olympic Games took place there in 2012. So why not London?" Furthermore, because guns are not readily available in England, the developers reasoned that it would make sense that the protagonists are unskilled with firearms, and only become skilled with repeated use (hence the leveling-up system).

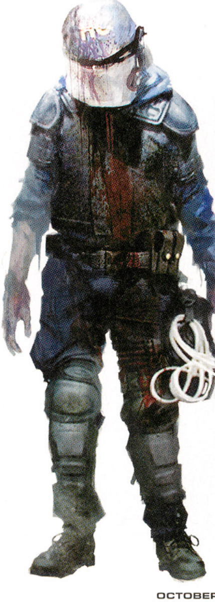
[Laughs]" I bludgeon my opponent and then finish him off with a blow to the head by holding ZR when the onscreen prompt appears.

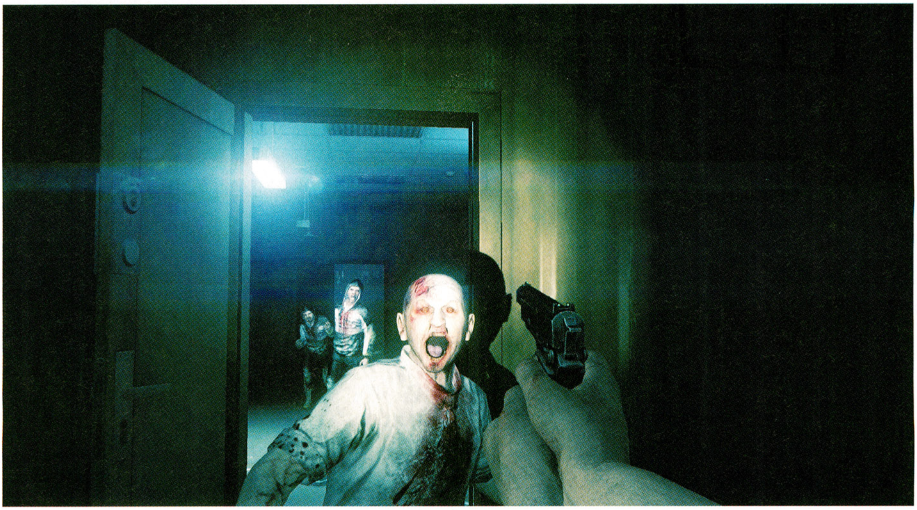
There's a landmine in this room, so I grab it and return to the main path. At the end of the hall to the right is a massive room that has a handful of baddies shuffling about inside. After tapping the carbine's icon on the touch screen—thereby equipping myself with the rifle—I bring up the targeting reticle by holding ZL and shoot an enemy in the head with a tap of ZR. The eerie piano notes that have been playing since the beginning of the demo cease as soon as I fire; that's because the zombie I just shot was banging its arm against some piano keys, creating the sound. It's a nice touch of humor from the folks who brought you the Raving Rabbids.

The shot also catches the attention of my victim's undead buddies. As I'm trying to dispatch the infected with my firearms, I get hit with something that clouds the TV screen. It turns out a black-gunk-expectorating zombie has entered the room. My priority then becomes to stop this new adversary, side-stepping its spew so I can actually see my target. Once all the enemies are defeated, I have time to grab loot from their bodies and run up a flight of stairs, neutralizing all the infected standing between me and the door to the next area. Suddenly another special zombie appears, covered from head to toe in police riot gear. This armored foe's only weak point is its head—and even then you have to blast its helmet off to reach the vulnerable bits.

Ultimately, I end up sprinting and trying to dodge the remaining zombies, as I had not done a good job of conserving ammo and am running dangerously low at this point. (I was playing the game like a traditional FPS because old habits die hard.) Finally I make my way to the end goal: a locked door with a numeric keypad. On the wall are three numbers scrawled in blood—"462"—but the fourth number to the code is illegibly smeared. (As I learned later, if I had taken my time, I could have discovered the whole code by using the blacklight on a painting in the beginning of the demo. In addition, the blacklight could have shown me arrows that lead to a hidden room housing a crossbow.) As I'm frantically trying to enter the numbers on the touch screen, I look up at the TV and see my character





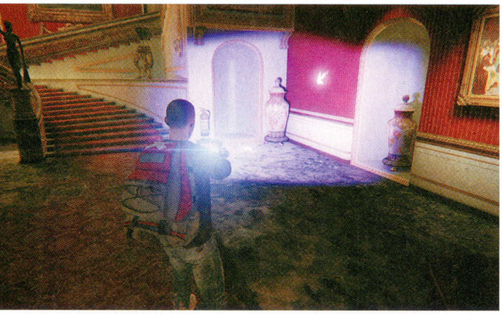


from a third-person perspective as a gang of zombies closes in on him, making it difficult for me to input the code as my anxiety level rises. Of course, heightening the tension is the whole reason for including this shift in the camera's perspective (which happens during distracted moments, such as when you're rummaging through your backpack). Caro recalls, "In the beginning when we had problems with players playing with the TV and the GamePad, we decided to put some messages on the TV to make them look down. So you were never playing on two screens at the same time.... But when we were trying to create more fear and tension in the game, we came to a point that...this was not tense enough. Watching only one screen at a time was too easy." I start wishing that things *were* a little easier at this point; eventually the undead horde overwhelms me and it's game over.

BORN AGAIN

Well, it's game over for that particular survivor, anyway. When you die, you immediately jump into a new character, *Quantum Leap*-style, and wake up in your safe house. The first three characters you can play as are the same in every playthrough (see the "Dead Alive" sidebar), but Caro tells us that the rest are randomly generated: "You have an infinite combination of heads, colors, skin, clothing, names, everything. Everything is mixed, so you won't have the same [character] again."

You might think this rebirth mechanic will make things really easy, especially because the world is persistent (meaning the doors you've unlocked before remain unlocked, for example). But there are some disadvantages to being reborn. Your character levels up as you use firearms, improving your reloading, aiming, and overall shooting abilities; however, you go



[Below] Fun fact: The zombies' vocals are provided by death-metal singers.

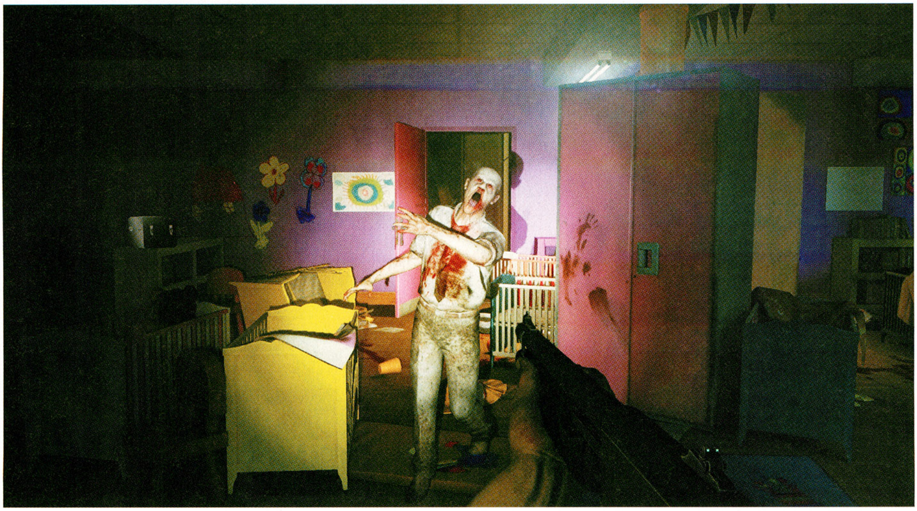
DEAD ALIVE

The first three survivors you can play as in ZombiU appear in the same sequence in every playthrough: there's what JP Caro calls "a classical hero guy," a young woman, and an old man. Caro explains that the reason for this is so players can compare with their friends how well they're performing in the main campaign. If you're skilled enough, however, you might never die. Accomplishing this seemingly impossible feat should adequately prepare you for an even greater challenge: the unlockable Survivor mode, in which you play through the single-player campaign with only one life. When you die, you aren't reborn: the credits roll, your save file is erased, and you start over from the very beginning.

back to square one when you switch to a new survivor. Furthermore, you don't have any of the items you acquired with your previous character, aside from basics such as the cricket bat. This can be circumvented somewhat by storing items in the big blue box in your safe house. To get everything else that your now-zombified character had in his backpack, though—such as that aforementioned unused landmine—you'll have to terminate him and loot his corpse.

Because the main character is ever-changing, it's difficult to use the protagonist to tell the story. The developers decided instead to deliver the plot through nonplayer characters, each of whom has a specific viewpoint. These perspectives were established during a staff exercise that posed the question, What if the zombie apocalypse actually happened while everyone was at the office? Caro remembers, "Some of us wanted to stay back at home and barricade and survive there, waiting for the army or someone else to solve the problem.... And this is surviving without moving; this is the philosophy of the prepper [in the game]. He is telling you, 'Stay here. I'm going to teach you how to stay here and survive. Explore your territory around your safe house, and do not move. Survive here.' And then we had some people from the core team trying to escape from Montpellier and just go to another town, because perhaps the problem is not there. So they were trying to escape the problem. This was the second philosophy of surviving with zombies. Sandra is one of the NPCs you can meet in the game, and she's [telling] you how to escape the town. Sometimes you'll play some missions with her to try to escape the city.... Some of us—I was really surprised by this—wanted to find a cure. They wanted to learn about the virus.... So we put the doctor [in the game]."

The prepper is the first person you encounter; the game begins with you running away from zombies, and the prepper—communicating via what look like webcams—directs you to safety. Later you meet up with Sandra and the doctor, and complete missions

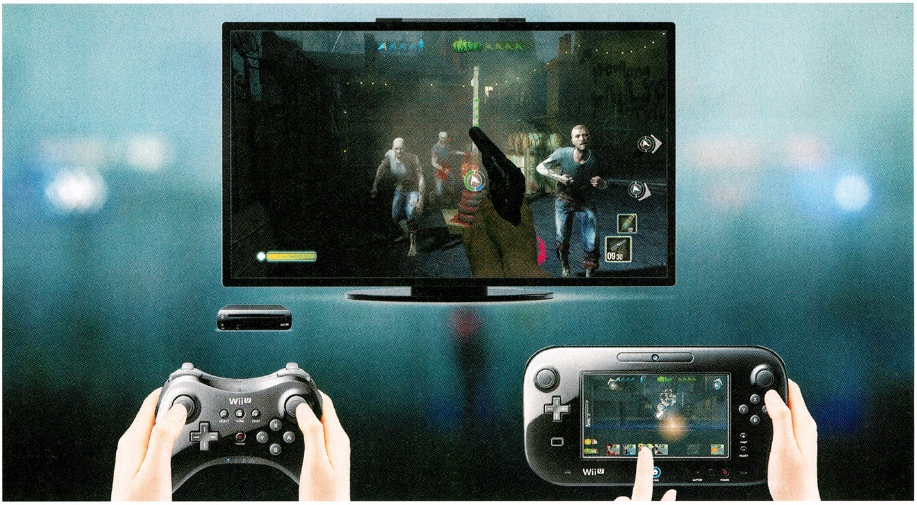


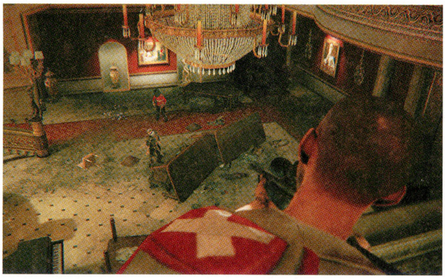
for them. (There are 17 missions in all, and the game's total length is estimated to be around 15 hours.)

ANARCHY IN THE UK

During that team survey, Caro and Sacré discovered that some people were "totally insane" and were happy that the zombie apocalypse had arrived because it meant that all the rules went out the window. ("We fired them," jokes Sacré.) Inspired by this anarchist perspective—as well as by works such as *The Road*—the developers created a fourth NPC, named King Boris. You never see his demented highness, but he plays an integral role in ZombiU's multiplayer mode. Here two people go head to head asymmetrically: the survivor focuses on the TV and uses the Wii U Pro Controller, playing the game like a traditional first-person shooter; the zombie master plays it like a real-time-strategy game on the GamePad touch screen. There are three flags on each of the five multiplayer maps (the two I played were a rooftop and a soccer stadium). You earn a point for capturing a flag, and the first to earn four points wins.

As the survivor, you choose your loadout (I went with the handgun-shotgun-grenade combo, but I could have gone with the carbine instead of the shotgun), and then hold positions at flags while dispatching the zombies that your opponent throws at you. As you level up (within the multiplayer portion only; none of the levels you earn here carry over into the single-player game), you are rewarded with items such as med kits and autoturrets. The latter are





NEVERMORE

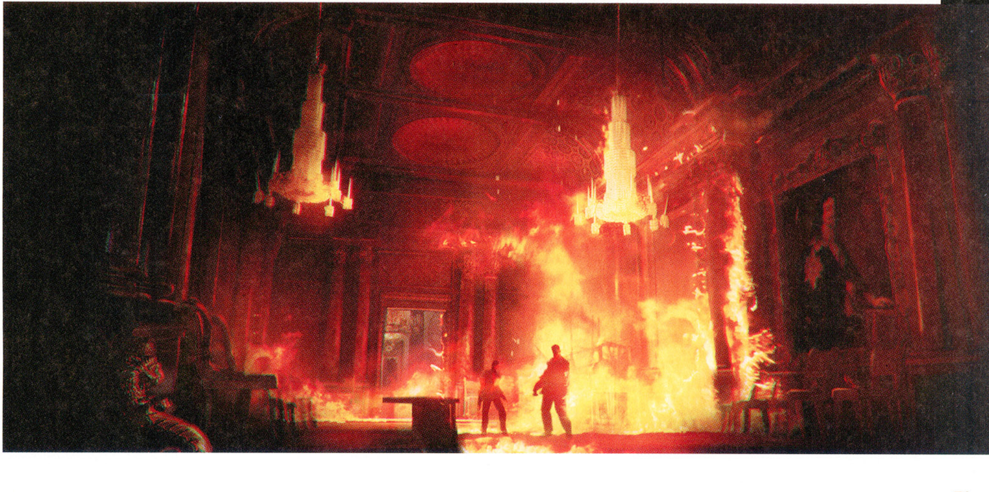
Ravens are a recurring theme in ZombiU, and that stems from a legend that if the ravens ever leave the Tower of London, the tower will crumble and a great disaster will befall England. The prepper is a former member of a secret organization called the Ravens of Dee (named after Queen Elizabeth I's consultant John Dee, the presumed origin of the legend), and Sandra, the prepper's ex-wife, is the head of the Ravens of Dee. Actual ravens appear on your radar as red dots, as do rats, so you might mistake them for zombies. This can be useful, though, as both ravens and rats can be sources of health-replenishing food. But be warned: some of these creatures carry the virus, so your health might take a hit should you decide to chow down.

useful for crowd control because you can just leave them near flags and let them do their thing. (There is a turret at specific points in the single-player portion, too, but you direct this manned machine gun by physically moving the GamePad.)

When playing as the zombie master, I had to keep an eye on resources. They are always regenerating automatically, but deploying the infected consumes resources quickly—not to mention that you're allowed only a certain number of zombies on the battlefield at once. (Fortunately, you can delete them to make room for new ones.) You start out with three variations: blue ones are the cheapest, but they just stand guard over wherever you placed them; white ones are slightly costlier basic grunts that chase the survivor; and the very expensive red ones capture flags. Leveling up grants you access to more-powerful types, including sprinting, armored, spitting, and explosive zombies.

The multiplayer in ZombiU is not limited to this local multiplayer mode, however; there is some online functionality, too. When you are offed in the single-player game, for instance, your zombified character can wander into your friends' games (and vice versa). You get updates on your character's activities—whether it has defeated your pals, for example, or whether it has been eliminated and had its soul freed. Additionally, you can write messages to other players (via symbols in order to avoid the stereotypical message-board shenanigans) that can be revealed with the blacklight. In much the same way as in Buckingham Palace, these messages are aimed at providing helpful information—directing you to hidden areas, for instance—but the development team is well aware that trolling can occur. To help combat this, a voting system allows folks to mark messages as either trustworthy or untrustworthy. Of course, the voters themselves could be lying to you….

This omnipresent sense of unease, the developers emphasize, is what they are trying to evoke. Unlike games in which you can easily mow down zombies, ZombiU is about surviving when the odds are always against you, and about the emotions that accompany that. "We always thought of emotions," Sacré says. "Always." It's this direction and the way the game exemplifies the Wii U hardware's uniqueness that makes ZombiU my most anticipated Wii U launch title.



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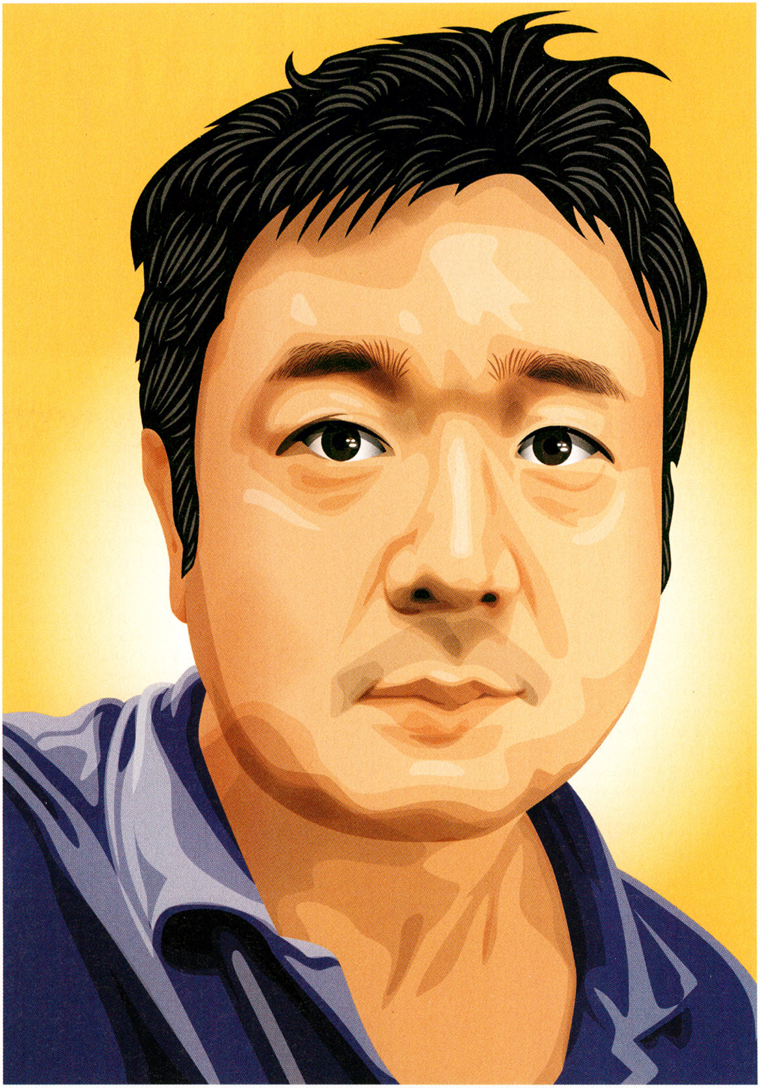
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
November 17, 1973

BIRTHPLACE
Tokyo, Japan

POSITION
Planner/director/scenario writer, Spike Chunsoft

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating 999 and Virtue's Last Reward; giving unusual interview answers about his wife

FAVORITE FOOD
Root-beer float (not really)

CURRENT PROJECTS
Secret

Kotaro Uchikoshi

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Kotaro Uchikoshi is a name synonymous with visual-novel games (also known as digital comics or graphic-text adventures). In North America, his M-rated Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors for Nintendo DS stands as one of the genre's biggest critical and commercial hits, thanks in no small part to Uchikoshi's penchant for writing thrilling, twist-filled stories and experimenting with genre conventions. Over the past 10 years, Uchikoshi has created some of the most compelling sci-fi mysteries in gaming—a talent that is on full display in his most recent work, Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward, published by Aksys Games.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you originally get into the video game business?

KOTARO UCHIKOSHI
I dropped out of college before I graduated. Was it because when I looked at my future, the road ahead seemed shrouded in darkness? No. In fact, the problem was that the road ahead was so bright that I could see the entire path unfolding in front of me. Now I realize that what I was seeing was nothing more than an optical illusion, but at the time it seemed very real and persuasive.

It was a track that ran straight through a desert. The sun beating down upon it was so strong that I could see all the way to the final station at the terminus. I remember being in despair over this. It was so bright that I couldn't see any hope at all. I was completely terrified. Being able to see that final station was like going through life with the prospect of death constantly dangling in front of me.

So I decided to disappear into the darkness. I would step off the tracks and plunge into a darkness that was so thick I wouldn't be able to see where I was going at all. It was like a deep forest or a dank underground cave. Being unable to see where I was going put my heart at ease and finally allowed me to relax. The sense that my path would be determined by my own decisions and actions was a feeling I wouldn't have traded for anything. But you can't blaze a trail with empty hands. To proceed through a dungeon, first you need a torch. And I chose for games to be that torch.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

In my elementary-school yearbook, I wrote "film director" under future ambitions. What I really wanted to be was a Jedi knight, but I couldn't speak English, so I had to abandon that dream.

What are some of the experiences you had when young that formed you as a person?

When I was 10 years old, I started lying to my parents and going to Kabukicho (Tokyo's red-light district) to see movies by myself. I was lucky not to have been kidnapped or something. I think that experience helped spark my love of darkness, danger, and adventure.

Do you consider yourself a writer first, or a game designer first?

I like them both, so, of course, they both come first. The one thing I don't like is that a game designer has some producer-like responsibilities, and I'm terrible at that. Tweaking numbers on some Excel spreadsheet, haggling with outsourcing companies...can't someone else handle that?

What compelled you to become a video game writer?

For my first industry job I actually started as a planner. One day my boss told me, "You seem like the sort of guy who could write a good [game] story. Why don't you try doing one?" He said it like it was no big deal—just an offhand comment like, "Hey, it's starting to rain. You should bring in your laundry." And just like that, my writing career was born.

Do you have any interest in working with other video game genres?

I do. I want to make an action-adventure. Actually, it isn't so much that I want to make a game in the action-adventure genre as it is that there's a specific project I've been wanting to make, and in order to make it happen, it has to be an action-adventure.

The design document is already written, and it's been pretty well received by the people I've shown it to, so I'm confident that somehow, in some form or another, it will get made. Please look forward to it.

How does the process of writing visual-novel games compare to other forms of writing?

I don't really have much experience working with other mediums, so it's hard for me to answer. But unlike novelists, visual-novel writers deal with things like background graphics and props and character assets, and have to craft their stories around the possible combinations of those materials.

It's different from writing manga and anime too. In those mediums, you're free to do whatever you want with your characters: get them wet, drench them in blood, cover them in wounds, etc. You can introduce new minor characters whenever you want. Games aren't like that. Characters can only perform the limited assortment of actions that were part of your original plan. It's difficult to make a visual novel unless its story naturally involves a strictly limited number of environments and characters.

In a past interview you referred to some Japanese visual novels that you felt are "more interesting than 999." What are they, and how did they influence you?

For older games, I would say One: Kagayaku Kisetsu e, Kanon, and EVE: Burst Error. For more recent games, I would say Steins;Gate and, while I hate to plug a game made by own company, I really enjoyed Dangan Ronpa.

I wouldn't say I was "influenced" by those games so much as I was violently pummeled by them. They had the

GAMEOGRAPHY

In Japan, Uchikoshi may be most famous for creating the Infinity series for now-defunct developer KID. The Infinity series was one of the first series of visual novels to be made specifically for consoles, but only Ever 17 saw an English localization.

PEPSI
PEPSI
5

PEPSIMAN
1999, PLAYSTATION (JAPAN)
3D MODELER

MEMORIES OFF
1999, PLAYSTATION (JAPAN)
SCENARIO WRITER

優夏
「そんなのハッキリとは言えないよ。ただぼんやりとした……不安感みたいなものがあるだけで……」

NEVER7: THE END OF INFINITY
2000, PLAYSTATION (JAPAN)
ORIGINAL SCENARIO

翔子
「つまり……『き・も・と』って、書いたんだと思うなぁ、私は……」

CLOSE TO: PRAYER HILL
2001, DREAMCAST (JAPAN)
ORIGINAL SCENARIO

same impact on me that I remember the Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey* having on me when I was younger.

Novels don't have pictures. Manga doesn't have audio. Films aren't interactive, so they can't pull you into their stories. That's what visual novels do. The titles I've listed above are the ones that show us just how interesting the genre can be.

Who is your favorite character in 999 or Virtue's Last Reward?
I get this question a lot, but I can't answer it. Now, there is a character that I consider to be my absolute favorite in the series. But I feel so much sympathy for this character, and so much sorrow for him or her, that if I even think about this character, I'll burst into tears.

In the last few interviews we've had, you've mentioned your wife a few times. How did you two meet? And does she read your interviews?
We met when we were shot by Cupid's arrow. And that Cupid was Russian.

Does she read my interviews? If she did, I wouldn't be alive to answer this question! And the thing is, she's actually very good at English, so I live in constant fear for my life.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
[When I started,] the Japanese game industry—and maybe this was true in America too—was like an underground society for outcasts. It was a club for people who couldn't accept reality, couldn't cope with reality, couldn't communicate with the people in reality, or all of the above. At least, that's how it seemed to me. Despite having talents in programming, or graphics, or writing, or sound design—or perhaps because of those talents—they couldn't function well in the outside world, and wound up in the game industry instead. They mocked established conventions and rebelled against contemporary values in an unassuming and yet deadly serious way. Indeed, they made a mockery of society itself.

I grew to love those guys. The community they had established was a place where I could feel at home. I thought, "This is exactly where I belong."

But in recent years, that underground society has been crumbling away. There are a variety of reasons for this, but the biggest one is that the video game industry has matured, and is being absorbed into conventional society. To put it bluntly, the industry has been invaded by banks and investors who are chasing the profit potential of games, and now the goal of game companies has shifted from "let's make interesting things" to "let's make whatever will sell." Of course, I don't have any objection to corporations striving to make a profit. But what of the underground society that I loved so much? That side of the game industry is teetering at the brink of annihilation.

The dark forest has been clear-cut, the dungeon has been dug up, and now that's all bathed in bright sunlight too. "Hey, it's brighter now," they say. "Now we don't have to worry about monsters anymore. Let's start laying train tracks!" But the game industry mustn't ever settle down. It has to keep adventuring. After all, adventures are what we're in the business of selling!

> *"But the game industry mustn't ever settle down. It has to keep adventuring."*

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
Every aspect of game development is fun, and at the same time, every aspect of game development is absolutely excruciating. In a way, it's just like being in love.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
How does one solve a tough problem? By falling asleep.

We may believe that our conscious minds are actively pondering things, but in truth, the conscious mind is nothing more than a spectator. There are a countless number of subconscious mental processes that are doing the actual thinking, and it's this collection of mental processes that are truly running the show.

Or at least, that's what I read in an article recently. That's right; this is just hearsay! [Laughs]

What other games or game creators do you most admire, and why?
The writer of Steins;Gate, Naotaka Hayashi; and the writer of Dangan Ronpa, Kazutaka Kodaka. Why? Because they're gods.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
Lately, it's been pretty much all movies. *Rebirth*, *Confessions*, *The Detective Is in the Bar*, *Tower Heist*, *Drive*, *The Artist*, *Ninja Scroll*, *Love Exposure*, *K-On!*, *Kick-Ass*...films like that.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Playing with my daughter, I guess. Lately we've been playing Snow White. Our game plays out a little differently from the movie; in the end Snow White creates the poison apple and makes the witch eat it.

That, and Twitter. I even use my terrible English powers to attempt to answer questions in English. So please don't hesitate to drop me a message at @uchikoshi.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
Jedi Force powers, of course.

GAMEOGRAPHY

EVER 17: OUT OF INFINITY
2005, PC
SCENARIO WRITER

12RIVEN: THE ΨCLIMINAL OF INTEGRAL
2008, PLAYSTATION 2 (JAPAN)
ORIGINAL STORY, SCRIPT WRITER, SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

She is correct, of course.

NINE HOURS, NINE PERSONS, NINE DOORS
2010, NINTENDO DS
DIRECTOR, PLANNER, SCENARIO WRITER

If that's true, then we can all go back the way we came and get into the warehouse...

ZERO ESCAPE: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD
2012, NINTENDO 3DS
DIRECTOR, SCENARIO WRITER

You might know **Joshua**. He loves video games, and he owns enough to know they're not all meant for kids. That's why he reminds his friends (at least the ones that have kids) that they all have **big black letters on the box** to help parents find the ones that are best for their families.

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Los Angeles, CA

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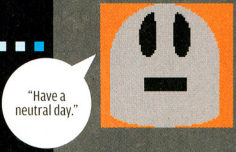
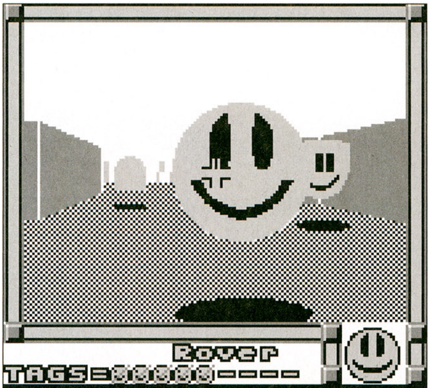

"Have a neutral day."

GAME BOY
FACEBALL 2000
1-4 PLAYERS
Nintendo
Bullet-Proof Software

Faceball 2000

A first-person shooter for Game Boy? Oh, it happened.

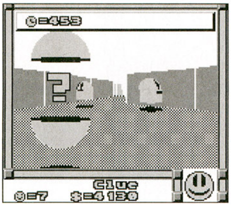
PLATFORM: **GAME BOY**
DEVELOPER: **XANTH SOFTWARE F/X**
PUBLISHER: **BULLET PROOF SOFTWARE**
RELEASE DATE: **DECEMBER 1991**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **23, 30, 33, 35, 37**
PERCENT CHANCE THAT YOU KNEW 15 OTHER PEOPLE WITH THIS GAME: **0**



That creepy, grinning face helps keep the action family-friendly. It also ensures that you'll always score a headshot.

People often credit id Software's 1992 release Wolfenstein 3D with popularizing the first-person shooter, but it was hardly the origin. The genre actually has roots that date back to the mid '70s, but one of the earliest titles to bear a resemblance to the FPS games of today is MIDI Maze, which was created by Xanth Software in 1987 for the Atari ST computer. Four years later, the company created a version of the game for Nintendo's original Game Boy under the futuristic (at the time) name Faceball 2000.

The title comes from the fact that the player character and all of the enemies are "Have a nice day"-style smiley faces. Sure, they may come in shapes other than spherical here, but they all share that same vacant grin (at least until they get shot a couple of times). The contrast between these symbols of happiness and engaging in a deathmatch is definitely humorous, and it's a convenient way to skirt potential violence issues.

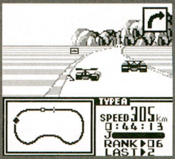


Compared to modern shooters, Faceball 2000 is incredibly simple. There are two game modes, Cyberscape and Arena. The former is a single-player experience that tasks you with maneuvering through a maze to find the exit. Early on, the stationary, unarmed enemies merely serve as obstacles, but more-dangerous foes are introduced as you progress. The real meat of the game is in the multiplayer Arena mode, where it's every face for itself. Here you have the option to play against AI opponents or against your friends. Faceball 2000 is the only Game Boy title that allows a whopping 16 people to play simultaneously. Of course, this requires multiple Game Boy Four Player Adapters, plenty of Link Cables, and well, 16 Game Boy systems and copies of the game. So yeah...it's highly unlikely that many consumers were able to take advantage of that feature.

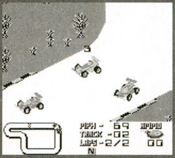
Perhaps the multiplayer was a little overambitious, and the 3D graphics look extremely primitive today, but in 1991 both were mighty impressive. Faceball 2000 is worthy of recognition as an innovator in portable gaming. —PHIL T.

FOUR SCORE

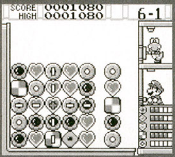
You probably never enjoyed a 16-player Faceball 2000 match, but there's a better chance that you were able to experience these four-player Game Boy titles.



TITLE: F-1 Race
RELEASE DATE: 1991
This game came packaged with the Game Boy Four Player Adapter, making it the showcase title for the multiplayer accessory.



TITLE: Super R.C. Pro-Am
RELEASE DATE: 1991
The original R.C. Pro-Am was a hit on the NES, and this sequel did a fine job of translating the fun to a handheld system.



TITLE: Yoshi's Cookie
RELEASE DATE: 1993
In this puzzle game, you align like-shaped sweets by manipulating rows and columns of them.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
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Juri P
Lakeside, CA

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REVIEWS

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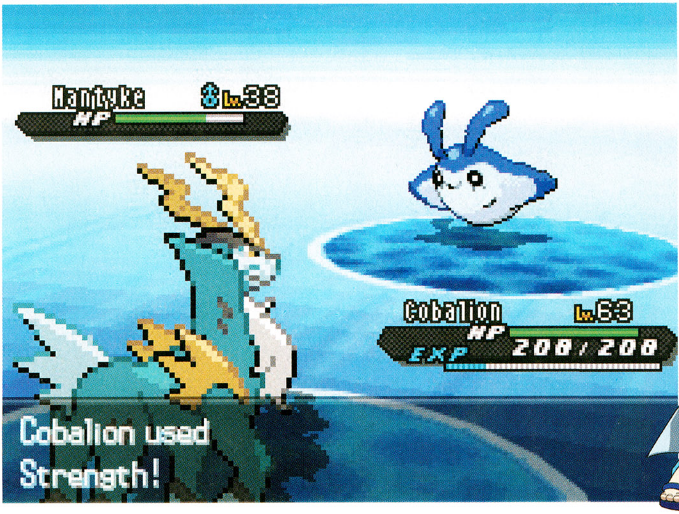
NINTENDO DS
POKÉMON BLACK VERSION 2 AND WHITE VERSION 2 pg. 80

Pokémon™
BLACK VERSION 2
Pokémon™
WHITE VERSION 2

We pay a return visit to the Unova region in Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2. Turn the page for our full travelogue!


Mantyke Lv.38
HP
Cobalion Lv.63
HP
208/208
EXP

Cobalion used Strength!

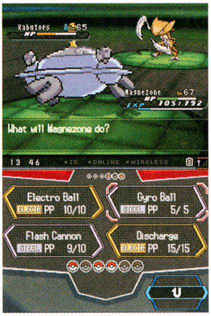
A Brighter Shade of Gray

POKEMON BLACK VERSION 2 AND WHITE VERSION 2

8.0

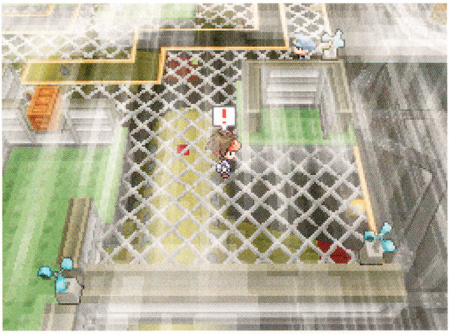
I imagine that somewhere in the Tokyo offices of Pokémon developer Game Freak, there's a framed sheet of parchment on which the Japanese equivalent of "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It" has been written with dramatic strokes of a calligraphy brush. It's a mantra that has served the company well, keeping the Pokémon series alive and growing for five game generations by focusing on adding features, refining the gameplay experience, and upgrading graphics while leaving the core mechanics, structure, and story of every installment basically unchanged. But after four generations of following marquee releases with slightly remixed editions (like 2009's Pokémon Platinum Version), Game Freak has finally fixed something that wasn't quite broken, succeeding Pokémon Black Version and White Version with numbered follow-ups instead of a remixed "Gray" version that some fans may have been anticipating. The result is a pair of significantly more interesting games than that remixed edition would have been, but ones that may leave fans wishing Game Freak had sustained that innovative spirit and fixed a few other Pokémon traditions too.

Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 are set two years after their predecessors, in the same region of Unova. In the intervening years, a chunk of Unova forestland has been bulldozed to make room for a few new towns and routes. Several existing towns and routes have been drastically remodeled, and a few freshly blazed trails lead to novel


Kabutops Lv65
HP
Magnezone Lv67
HP 105/152
EXP

What will Magnezone do?

13 46
IR ONLINE WIRELESS
Electro Ball ELECTR PP 10/10
Gyro Ball STEEL PP 5/5
Flash Cannon STEEL PP 9/10
Discharge ELECTR PP 15/15



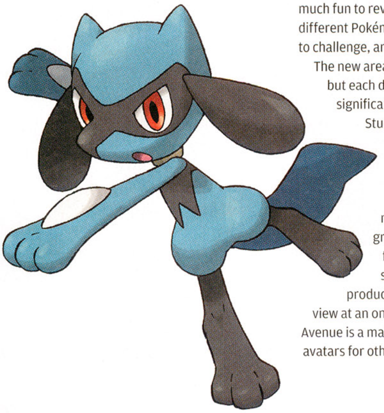
[Above] Skyla's new gym is in an airplane hangar blasted by heavy winds.

destinations. Pokémon Black Version and White Version veterans have seen the majority of the game's locations before, but it's still fun to revisit old towns to see what's changed and catch up with old friends. Hidden grottos that offer opportunities to snag hard-to-get items and catch special Pokémon have been scattered throughout the game's world, giving players a reason to thoroughly explore the backroads of Unova anew. Additionally, all eight of the Gyms have been drastically redesigned, with each featuring a different gimmick and a very attractive visual makeover. The dungeon areas are mostly unchanged, and not much fun to revisit, but do feature different Pokémon to catch, Trainers to challenge, and items to gather.

The new areas aren't numerous, but each does offer something significant to do. PokéStar Studios allows players and their Pokémon to star in special-effects-laden films, performing moves in front of a green screen to create footage that is used in slick Hollywood-style productions for players to view at an onsite theater. Join Avenue is a marketplace where the avatars for other players with whom you've connected set up shop and sell unique items. And the Pokémon World Tournament offers a variety of flashy challenges against scores of famous Trainers from throughout Pokémon-series history.

Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 don't offer much in terms of entirely new Pokémon, although they do offer a few alternate versions of old Pokémon (ones that have otherwise-unattainable moves or abilities). Instead, the game features an expanded Pokédex that brings back hundreds of Pokémon from past games and sprinkles them in among the Unova natives to make sure players have different options with which to fill out their rosters as they progress through the game. With the largest roster of catchable Pokémon ever, Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 offer a rare opportunity for first-time players to build up a large Pokémon collection without having to do extensive trading with seasoned veterans.

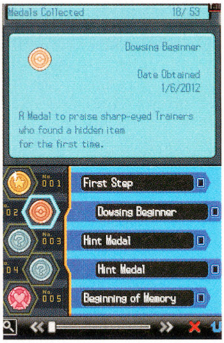
Other new features include a Medal system that offers hundreds of goals for players who want to delve deeply into the game, the



Heavy Medals

Early in Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2, you'll be awarded a Medal Case that has room for well over 200 different Medals. You can earn Medals for activities like reading road signs and appearing in musicals, for Training achievements like capturing Pokémon of a certain type or evolving a certain number of Pokémon, and for combat victories in areas like the Battle Subway or Pokémon World Tournament. You can collect your Medals at any Pokémon Center, where you'll also be rewarded with Hint Medals that point you to future Medal-worthy achievements. If you earn a Medal you're particularly proud of, you can stick it to your Trainer Card for everyone to see. There's even a building in Castelia City where the staff tracks Medal-related accomplishments and awards you a rank based on your tally.

GEAR
IR
ONLINE
WIRELESS
RADAR



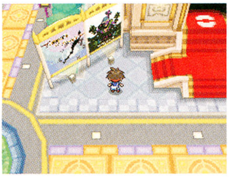
Medals Collected 18/ 53

Dowsing Beginner

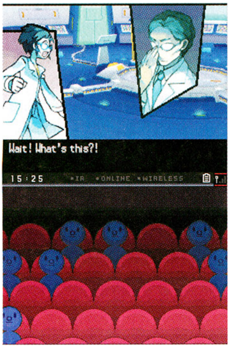
Date Obtained
1/6/2012

A Medal to praise sharp-eyed Trainers who found a hidden item for the first time.

No. 001 First Step
02 Dowsing Beginner
No. 003 Hint Medal
04 Hint Medal
No. 005 Beginning of Memory



PokéStar Studios lets Trainers star in slickly produced Hollywood blockbusters like this sci-fi flick.



Wait! What's this?!

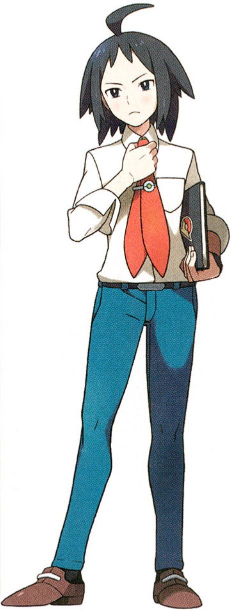
ability to perform co-op quests with other players over a wireless connection, and a high-level random dungeon area that is ideal for leveling up Pokémon and earning valuable stat-boosting items.

There are even unlockable difficulty settings that can be traded from player to player (the harder difficulty is available in Pokémon Black Version 2, the easier in White Version 2) to give strong players an added challenge or weak players a way to take on some of the difficult late-game content. These features, along with the expanded roster of Pokémon, combine to give players an unprecedented selection of things to do after the credits have rolled. If you're the type that's driven to fill up your Pokédex, earn all the Medals, and craft a maxed-out team of Level-100 Pokémon, you'll find hundreds of hours of gameplay in Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2, all with a much better sense of progression than any previous title has offered.

The additions in Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 are excellent, and since they mostly supplement the features of their predecessors without replacing

Swanna ♂ Lv.50
HP
Braviary ♂ Lv.50
HP
Magnezone Lv.50
HP 108/146
EXP
Tyranitar ♀ Lv.50
HP 177/177
EXP

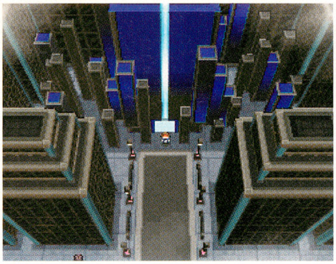
The foe's Swanna used Scald!

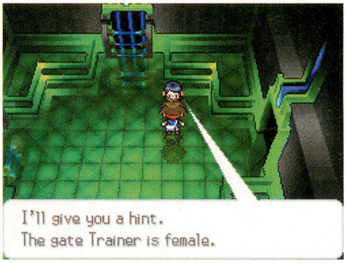


The Quest Goes On... And On... And On...

Players who yearn for higher-level challenges will find exactly what they seek in the new Black Tower and Whitetree Hollow areas of Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2, respectively. Both areas are dungeons with progressively larger and more challenging floors than those in the previous iterations of the areas, and each is filled with enemy Pokémon Trainers. One of these Trainers is a gate guard who can open the gate to the boss of the floor, but in order to find the gate guard you have to piece together clues from defeated Trainers, who can only point you in a general direction, tell you the guard's gender, or describe the room they're in. Once you defeat the gate guard, you have to find the gate and defeat the boss Trainer beyond it to clear the floor and earn a reward.

You can't use any recovery items in these dungeons, so while every Trainer challenge gets you closer to your quarry, it also leaves you in worse shape for the boss. Fortunately, one doctor per floor will heal your Pokémon—but only once, and only if you defeat him in battle. These dungeons offer the most significant challenges in the game, and since the floors are randomized each time you play, you can challenge them over and over again to level up different Pokémon.





I'll give you a hint.
The gate Trainer is female.

Unfezant ♂ Lv.53
HP
Cobalion Lv.55
HP 150/187
EXP

Cobalion used
Iron Head!

Bianca: Heeey!

them, these games offer a much richer experience. But as good as they are, they still feel more like incremental upgrades than sequels. Pokémon fans have come to expect a certain amount of repetition from the series, but the rigidity of the formula isn't an issue when the games release several years apart and each generation features a new world, new Pokémon, and new features and upgrades that have been born out of more advanced hardware. But Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 have none of these things to help distinguish them from the Pokémon Black Version and White Version that came out just last year, so the feeling of sameness is stronger than ever. These games would have been a great opportunity for the developers to experiment with changes to the series's long-standing formula, but instead, every aspect of its quest unfolds in the same predictable fashion as every other game in the series. Why can't we have a different sort of protagonist with different goals? Why can't we have different HM abilities that lead to novel ways to explore the world? With so many Pokémon to choose from, why are we stuck with the same three starting Pokémon from the previous pair of games, with the same three types as they have in every other game in the series? If Game Freak wants to make memorable sequels out of existing worlds, mechanics, and Pokémon, the studio needs to find *something* in the Pokémon formula that it's willing to change.

That said, Game Freak's continuous process of expansion and refinement has created the most polished and voluminous Pokémon releases yet. Despite being a follow-up to an existing game duo, they're a fantastic entry point to the series; you don't need to have played either of the previous games to understand the story, and these follow-ups have the same gentle learning curve as any other Pokémon title. But while Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 offer plenty of new things to do, much of the return trip to Unova will feel overly familiar to anyone who played their forebearers. These are superior versions of already great games, but they don't offer a different enough experience to justify the “2” in their titles. —**CASEY L**

DS PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **GAME FREAK**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT VIDEO GAME VEHICLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO DRIVE OR PILOT IN REAL LIFE?

JUSTIN CHENG

Ryo Hazuki's forklift. Sure, it might seem like a rather mundane vehicle, but the forklift is pretty awesome in Sonic and Sega All-Stars Racing.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

I'm going with the Epoch from Chrono Trigger. I mean, the only thing cooler than a personal aircraft is a time-traveling personal aircraft.

CODY MARTIN

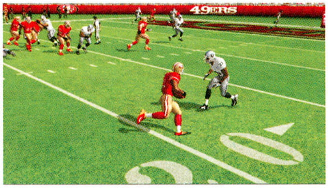
Do airships count? If so, I'd commandeer one of Bowser's and see the world in style.

PHIL THEOBALD

Drive or pilot? Don't make me choose! I would love to blast off in Gradius's Vic Viper, but if I'm stuck on the ground (or underground), I'd have to go with SOPHIA THE 3RD from the NES classic Blaster Master. You can't go wrong with a submersible hover tank.

STEVE THOMASON

The *Delphinus* from Skies of Aracadia. I've always been fascinated by battleships, and the *Delphinus* is essentially a flying battleship, aka the coolest thing ever.



Take a Hike

MADDEN NFL 13

EA
0
0
4:54
1st
A. Peterson
POS HB
RUSH ATTEMPTS 0
YARDS 0
1ST & 10
:13

6.5 The running joke about sports games in general, and Madden in particular, is that they amount to little more than a full-price roster update. So what do you say when they actually amount to a *little less* than that?

Madden NFL 13 for Wii is nearly indistinguishable from last year's installment, with one key exception: it lacks online play. Despite that significant omission, and a general lack of new features and improvements (to be fair, the game does have new commentary from the team of Phil Simms and Jim Nantz), Madden 13 is a good football game, with many modes that actually make it better for local multiplayer than Madden on other platforms.

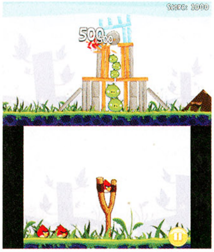
The genius in all these game modes is their ability to bridge the gap between not just casual and serious football fans, but also casual and serious gamers. The five-on-five mode is an especially excellent demonstration of this appeal. It was easily the most-played variation among my friends, thanks to its fast action and clever power-ups that hark back to classic arcade sports games.

There are still reasons to love the way Madden is offered on Wii—it's just a shame that its value proposition relative to last year's edition is not among them. —**MIKE P.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA TIBURON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

A Cuckoo Cost

ANGRY BIRDS TRILOGY



6.0 Angry Birds Trilogy brings the world-renowned downloadable series to a Nintendo platform in a package that includes Angry Birds Classic, Seasons, and Rio. For those who haven't played Angry Birds before, here are the basics: you use a giant slingshot to fling your flock at towers and other structures in order to destroy the green piglike creatures inside. Each type of bird has a unique ability for the job, such as dropping egg bombs or self-destructing at a button's push.

The gameplay still provides the enjoyable and casual experience that Angry Birds is known for, but this version's price doesn't suit it. Considering that the cost of the trilogy's three titles combined is only $3 on most downloadable markets, this title's $30 cost is inappropriate. Sure, there's a mediocre StreetPass feature, achievements, online leaderboards, and a small handful of exclusive unlockable levels on offer, but these trivial additions don't justify a 10-times-higher expense.

Although Angry Birds Trilogy provides a unique Angry Birds experience for Nintendo 3DS owners, given the cheap and widespread availability of the game's core content, it's difficult to recommend Angry Birds Trilogy to anyone other than hardcore fans and those who truly have no other medium for playing it. —**CODY M.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **ROVIO/ HOUSEMARQUE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

This is **Richard**. He knows it's his job to teach his son **Scotty** what this whole gaming thing is about. The age rating helps him **pick the right games**, but being a good dad means he always wants to know more.

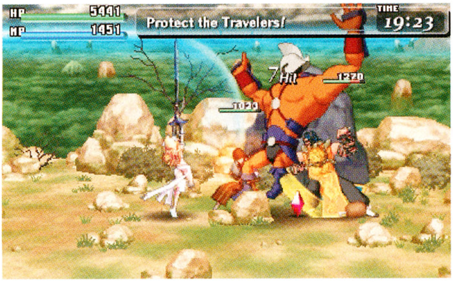
That's exactly what the **ESRB's rating summaries** are for.

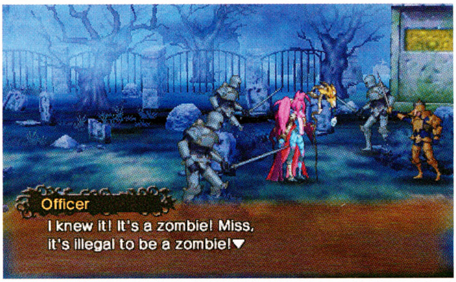
Search for a game's rating summary at **ESRB.org**.

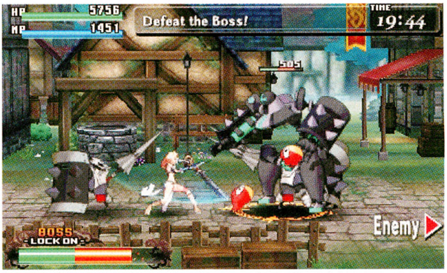
Rich H.
Lafayette, IN

ESRB
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

EARLY CHILDHOOD eC CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB




Officer
I knew it! It's a zombie! Miss, it's illegal to be a zombie!▼



Battle Royal

CODE OF PRINCESS

7.5 Half old-school hack-'n'-slash action, half anime-inspired silliness, Code of Princess provides a wealth of solid—if imperfect—slice-and-dice fun. Fans of the classic Sega Saturn game Guardian Heroes will feel right at home with Code of Princess's three-planed battlefield, diverse character lineup, fighting-game-style special moves, RPG-esque character-growth system, and emphasis on both physical and magical attacks; it's a winning combination that works almost as well now as it did back in the 32-bit era.

Code of Princess also succeeds from a visual standpoint. If you like your games 2D, hand-drawn, and gorgeously animated, there's a lot to enjoy here, and the music is catchy as well. In addition, the story entertains by deftly intertwining the serious and the ridiculous, as charmingly goofy characters and situations blend with tales of world-destroying Armageddon. Where else are you going to find a lovelorn ninja, a narcissistic elf-mage, *and* recurring gags about whether one of the characters is a cat or a raccoon? Plentiful cut-scenes (which come complete with appropriately over-the-top voice acting) bookend each of the game's bite-sized chapters, ensuring that the action never becomes a drag.

Such trappings go only so far, however. By its nature this is a repetitive genre, and although each playable character has a nice array of standard moves and special attacks, you'll inevitably end up relying on a handful of the most useful ones that you'll repeat over and over. (Frequently recycled environments don't help matters either.) More problematic is the game's sluggish framerate; with the stereoscopic 3D visuals enabled the game is infuriatingly choppy, and even when you turn the effects off the action never feels quite as brisk as it should.

Solange
Thank you. All of you! With friends like you guys, there's no way we can lose.

Regardless, Code of Princess offers plenty of reasons to keep playing. Alongside the story mode, the game offers a free-play mode (which enables you to replay stages using a wider range of heroes) and numerous bonus challenge missions. There's tons of equipment to acquire, loads of characters to unlock and level up, and versus and co-op modes for up to four players (both online and offline). The frame rate, thankfully, doesn't drop any further when engaging in multiplayer; it's just too bad you can't play the story mode cooperatively.

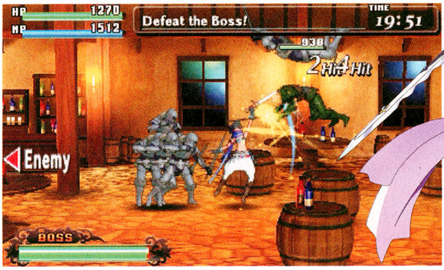
Ultimately, Code of Princess isn't as good as its spiritual predecessor, but it nonetheless offers an enjoyable, content-rich, and often genuinely funny action experience.

—CHRIS H.

N3DS PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **AGATSUMA ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **TEEN**

1027
Defeat All Enemies!
10
19:39
2nd
Enemy ▶

1451
Survival!
1:32
Enemy ▶



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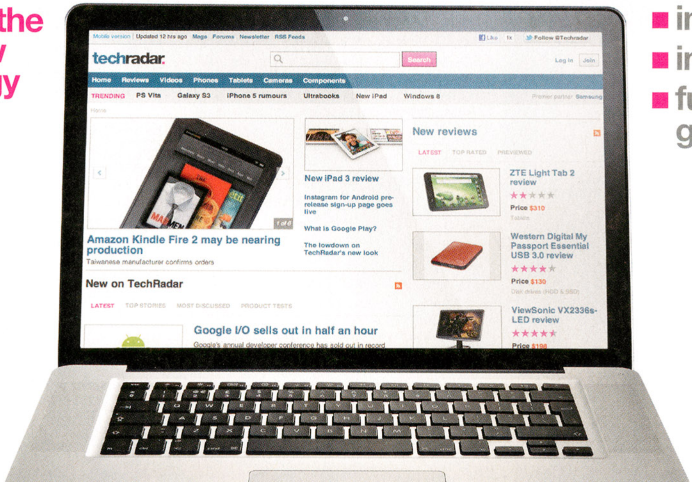

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	T
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Crush 3D	7.0	Sega	275	E10+
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Funky Barn 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	276	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
Heroes of Ruin	7.0	Square Enix	280	T
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
Kid Icarus: Uprising	9.5	Nintendo	277	E10+
Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance	8.0	Square Enix	281	E10+
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	7.0	Warner Bros.	280	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	275	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Mario Tennis Open	7.0	Nintendo	278	E
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	9.0	Konami	276	M
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. 2	**8.5**	**Nintendo**	**282**	**E**
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
Order Up!!	6.5	UTV Ignition	275	E
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rayman Origins	8.5	Ubisoft	279	E10+
Resident Evil: Revelations	9.0	Capcom	275	M
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	8.0	Sega	280	E10+
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	5.5	Atari	278	E
Shifting World	6.5	Aksys	277	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	7.0	Nintendo	277	T
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Tales of the Abyss	7.0	Namco Bandai	275	T
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	7.5	Namco Bandai	276	T
Tetris Axis	**7.5**	**Nintendo**	**272**	**E**
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	8.0	Square Enix	280	E10+
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

MORE ON:

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

Sure, I may have already played through New Super Mario Bros. 2 when I reviewed it last month, but now that it's available in stores, I've been continuing to enjoy it thanks to the excellent Coin Rush mode. Between the other guys in the office and random people with whom I StreetPass, it's always a treat to see a new challenge for me to face. One fellow I encountered earned a whopping 30,000 coins in one of the courses. I still have a long way to go before I'm able to beat that. I refuse to resort to using White Raccoon Mario, though. That's cheating! —PHIL T.

84
442
WORLD -3
×228
Score
005064890
0020
Best 0242

MORE ON:

TETRIS AXIS

I've been on the road a lot lately, so I've had more time to play portable games. I had loads of excellent titles to choose from, but I kept returning to Tetris Axis, as it's the kind of game that I can play in short bursts or for hours at a time. I didn't really dig into any of the other modes aside from the traditional Marathon mode, but that was more than enough to keep me entertained. I still think both Tetris DS and Tetris for Game Boy are the best versions of Tetris overall, but Tetris Axis is good fun. —JUSTIN C.

HOLD
NEXT
LINES 28
LEVEL 3
LINES 28
LEVEL 3
TIME 2'36"36
SCORE 10145
BEST TIME --'--"--
HIGH SCORE 10145

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
The Adventures of Tintin: The Game	5.5	Ubisoft	275	E10+
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	T
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T

MORE ON:

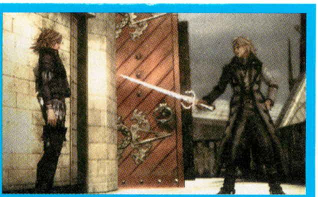
AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER—INTO THE INFERNO

Having recently finished the epic TV series, I decided to pick up the most-recent and best-rated *Avatar: The Last Airbender* game that I could find. Into the Inferno's top-down action is decent, and the puzzles aren't bad, but I wasn't pleased with the fact that you have to use the stylus and touch screen for everything. There's a co-op option so you can play through the story mode with a friend, though, which seems like it would make for a fun experience. —CODY M.

Bit.Trip Complete	**9.0**	Aksys	271	E
Brave: The Video Game	**5.0**	Disney	280	E10+
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion XL	**6.0**	Crave	274	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	**6.5**	Atari	273	E10+
Disney Universe	**4.5**	Disney	273	E10+
Driver San Francisco	**4.5**	Ubisoft	271	T
Epic Mickey	**8.5**	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 12	**8.0**	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	**7.5**	Xseed	273	E
Fortune Street	**7.5**	Nintendo	274	E
Go Vacation	**7.0**	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition	**8.5**	Nintendo	282	E10+
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	**8.5**	Nintendo	272	E10+
The Last Story	**9.0**	Xseed	281	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	**7.0**	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	**9.5**	Nintendo	274	E10+
Lost In Shadow	**8.0**	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	**7.0**	Electronic Arts	271	E
Major League Baseball 2K12	**2.5**	2K Sports	277	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	**7.0**	Sega	273	E
Mario Party 9	**8.0**	Nintendo	276	E
Mario Sports Mix	**8.0**	Nintendo	264	E
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	**5.5**	Nintendo	276	E
Rayman Origins	**9.5**	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rhythm Heaven Fever	**8.0**	Nintendo	276	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	**8.0**	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	**7.0**	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	**7.0**	Activision	273	T
Super Mario All-Stars	**9.0**	Nintendo	263	E
TRON: Evolution–Battle Grids	**6.5**	Disney	263	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	**7.0**	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	**6.5**	THQ	274	T
X-Men Destiny	**2.5**	Activision	273	T
Xenoblade Chronicles	**9.0**	Nintendo	277	T

MORE ON:

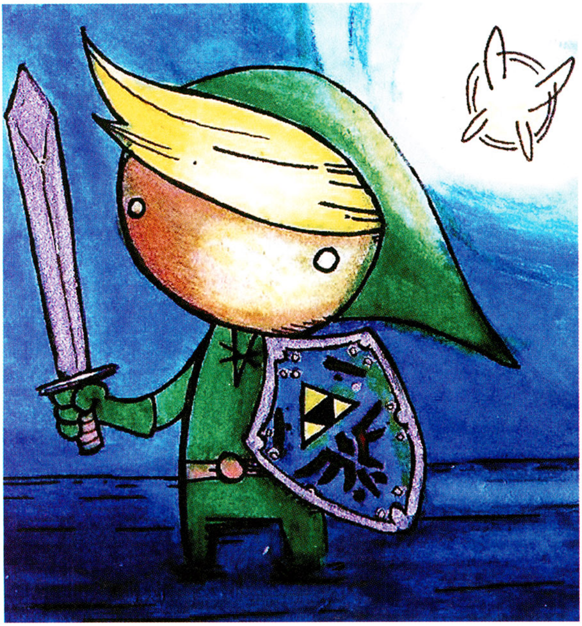
THE LAST STORY

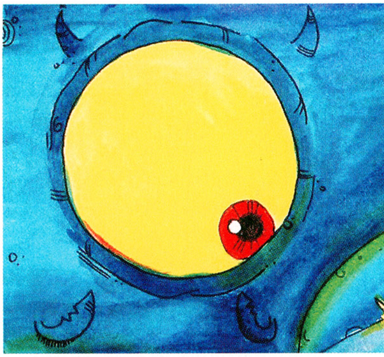


I've already conquered The Last Story once, but I'm eager to give it another playthrough. The way characters interact with each other and with the game world prevents the action from ever getting old, and the production values are spectacular; it's easily one of the best-looking and -sounding titles on Wii. I'm eagerly anticipating more online co-op, too. —CHRIS H.

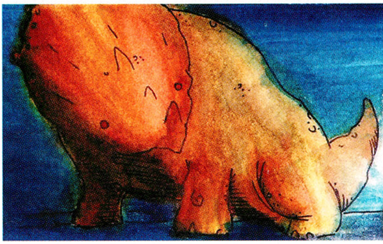
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	**8.0**	Sega	272	T
The Amazing Spider-Man	**5.0**	Activision	281	E10+
ATV Wild Ride	**7.0**	Destineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	**8.5**	PopCap	274	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	**5.0**	Majesco	271	E
de Blob 2	**8.0**	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	**7.5**	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	**7.5**	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	**8.0**	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	**9.0**	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	**9.0**	Destineer	265	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	**8.0**	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	**8.0**	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	**8.0**	Nintendo	271	E
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	**6.0**	Tomy	264	T
Plants vs. Zombies	**9.0**	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Conquest	**9.0**	Nintendo	279	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	**8.5**	Nintendo	272	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	**8.0**	Atlus	276	T
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	**9.0**	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	**5.0**	Activision	273	E10+
TRON: Evolution	**6.5**	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men Destiny	**2.0**	Activision	273	E10+





[Above] We'll refrain from making a cornea "eye" pun here. [Below] Dodongos may dislike smoke, but this one seems more curious than anything.



FANDOM

A Symbolic Link to the Past

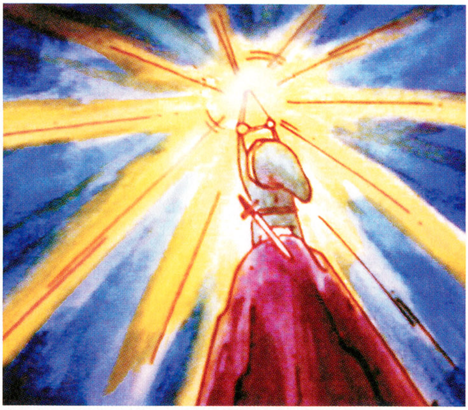
Honoring childhood memories through art

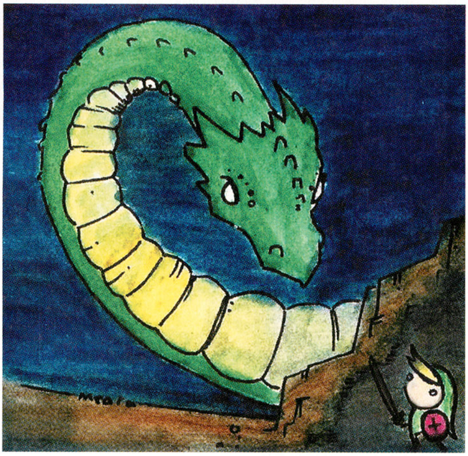
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA is much more than a game to artist Michael Meara. It's a reminder of all the great times he spent with his mom, who recently passed away from cancer. That's why Meara was inspired to paint Zelda characters and dedicate them to his mother.

"I have always been obsessed with The Legend of Zelda, and I played every Zelda game ever released," said Meara. "Before my mom passed, I started this Legend of Zelda watercolor project as a tribute to our time together when I was young. We played Zelda a lot together, and this was a great way to help me get through a very tough time."

Meara's paintings, which he refers to as mini watercolors because they are only two to three inches tall, were featured in a gallery display at the New England Institute of Art, from which he graduated recently. Meara recounts, "Back in April my teacher was head of a gallery featuring professionals in the video game industry in the Boston area. He saw my watercolors on my blog and asked if I would be interested in featuring my art as well. This was huge for me because I was the only one from my school that was picked. It was also a big deal for me because of how important it was to show off art that I did for my mom since she never got to see this project finished."

Meara started dabbling in art when he was eight years old, but just began experimenting with watercolors recently. Many of his works have been inspired by video games: "What got me started drawing when I was young was when I used to watch my older brother draw and wanted to learn to do the same. I played a lot of video games





at that time, and I remember using my issues of Nintendo Power for inspiration. I got my first Nintendo for Christmas, and my mom got me a subscription for Nintendo Power right after that. I even remember the very first issue coming in the mail (the Super Mario Bros. 2 cover). Nintendo Power had a huge impact on my passion for drawing and helped me mold my style. I remember I used to wait by the mailbox every month in anticipation of the next issue."

Like many moms, Meara's wasn't all that interested in video games, but The Legend of Zelda captured her attention. Meara recalls, "My mom was obsessed with the original Legend of Zelda. She had her own save file and even played the game when I was at school. Then, when the SNES came out, we both played A Link to the Past together using the same save file and helped each other out. I will never forget how she would yell at the screen and call Ganon a 'stupid dingbat' or 'stupid dippy stick' when I would fight him at the end of the game. My mom had a way with words."

Meara is hoping to pursue an art career in the video game industry, and is getting ready to release his own original web comic about a superhero named Puck. You can view more of Meara's artwork at mearaimages.com. —**NICOLE T.**

TAKE
your best
SHOT

PHOTO CHALLENGE

SEND YOUR PICS TO photos@nintendopower.com.

Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones.

THIS MONTH'S THEME: NINTENDO POWER

VOLUME 281'S THEME: CAMPING TRIPS

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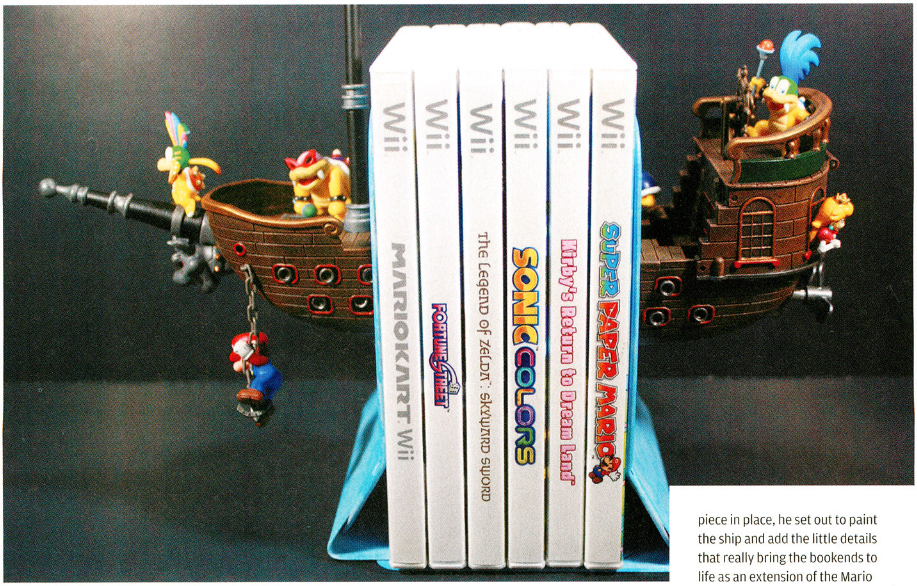
PHOTOGRAPH FROM TORGO

PHOTOGRAPH FROM META ZEKROM


Wii
MARIOKART Wii
FORTUNE STREET
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
SONIC COLORS
Kirby's Return to Dream Land
SUPER PAPER MARIO

FANDOM

Book This Trip

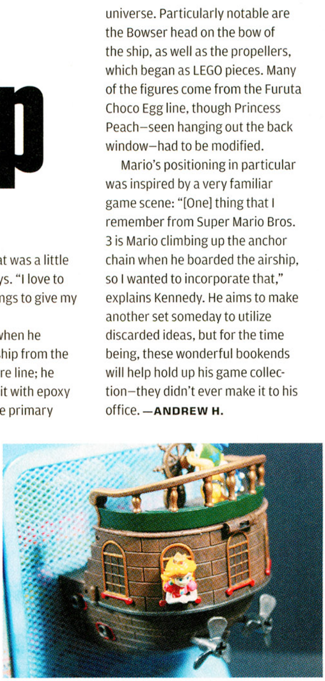
What can airships hold? In this case, books or games!

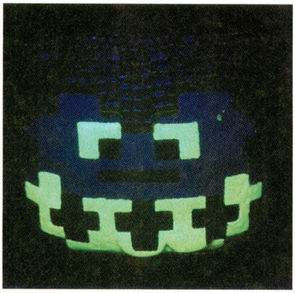
WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE the dizzying process that goes through ace toy customizer Donald Kennedy's head when he stumbles upon an intriguing item. He's shared some inventive modified figures with us in these pages in the past, but his latest creation serves a function beyond simply looking cool: it's actually a pair of bookends, each made up of one-half of the iconic airship seen in various Super Mario games.

Kennedy, a 32-year-old electrical engineer from El Paso, Texas, admits that this project spawned from a practical need. "Honestly, I needed bookends for work, but I wanted something that was a little more my style," he says. "I love to customize my own things to give my desk a bit of flair."

Inspiration struck when he came across a pirate ship from the Minimates action-figure line; he cut it in half and filled it with epoxy sculpting clay. With the primary piece in place, he set out to paint the ship and add the little details that really bring the bookends to life as an extension of the Mario universe. Particularly notable are the Bowser head on the bow of the ship, as well as the propellers, which began as LEGO pieces. Many of the figures come from the Furuta Choco Egg line, though Princess Peach—seen hanging out the back window—had to be modified.

Mario's positioning in particular was inspired by a very familiar game scene: "[One] thing that I remember from Super Mario Bros. 3 is Mario climbing up the anchor chain when he boarded the airship, so I wanted to incorporate that," explains Kennedy. He aims to make another set someday to utilize discarded ideas, but for the time being, these wonderful bookends will help hold up his game collection—they didn't ever make it to his office. **—ANDREW H.**





FANDOM

Monkey Shines

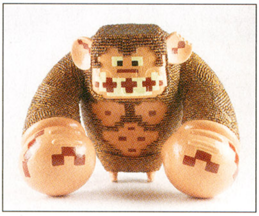
This Donkey Kong doll is radiant.

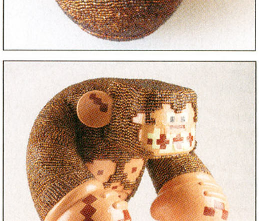
IF—LIKE THE HUMANS in *Planet of the Apes*—you have a fear of simians, you probably should avert your eyes from this vinyl Donkey Kong doll from Denise Vasquez of Hollywood, California. But then you'd miss seeing the majesty of its glow-in-the-dark visage. Even in the light this doll is a sight to behold: covered in over a thousand glass beads to give it a truly pixelated look, it creates the illusion that DK leapt out of the game screen and into the real world.

"When I was a little girl, a friend of mine had glow-in-the-dark stars, planets, and constellations on her ceiling.... I've been inspired since!" Vasquez enthuses. "Making my Donkey Kong's face glow-in-the-dark just seemed like the perfect opportunity to incorporate yet another one of my childhood loves into this work of art."

Vasquez has a deep fondness for the classic Donkey Kong game on the NES, so when the Vinyl Thoughts 2 art show asked her to participate in its game-themed iteration, she didn't even have to think about what game she wanted to pay tribute to. "The idea of creating my 8-bit custom Donkey Kong vinyl toy simply flowed from my heart, so I listened!" she tells us.

Vasquez credits her family with being enthusiastic about celebrating her childhood loves: her grandmother was a seamstress, which gave her "access to amazing fabrics, materials, beads, zippers, buckles, threads, and more." She sums up here artistic drive succinctly: "As long as I have my imagination and some things I could use to create, I'm happy." —**DAVID W.**





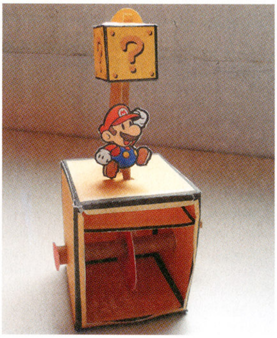
PHOTOS BY SHADDAI BERRON

FANDOM

Paper Mario Machine

A blogger's astonishing automaton celebrates the plucky plumber.

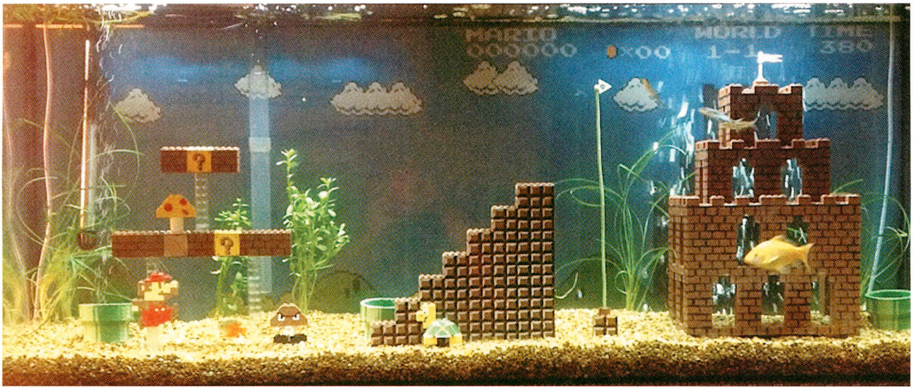
AFTER SIX YEARS of blogging and making videos about her crafts, longtime Brooklyn, New York, resident Meg Allan Cole put her talents to use on a game-related project: a Mario automaton. An automaton, in Cole's words, is "self-moving machine, which basically is a robot"—in this case, an adorable crank-operated Paper Mario robot that continually bops a question-mark box to reveal the golden coin inside.



Cole undertook the project as a contribution to the Craftzine blog. She printed out the designs, carefully sliced them out with an X-Acto knife, stuck them together with a glue stick, and made an axle that rotates around snail cams (a snail-shell-looking mechanism that allows for a slow rise and fall of another component). Finally, she constructed a crank arm and other guts for the machine to make the mamma mia–inducing Mario magic happen.

"It was a tough project, but well worth the time and cursing involved," affirms Cole. "Mario has that iconic look and feel to him.... Unlike so many things from our childhood, Mario has never disappeared."

To see Cole's video explaining how to assemble your own Mario automaton, check out www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLjUEUSNiwg. —**DAVID W.**



FANDOM

Fishy Mario Fans

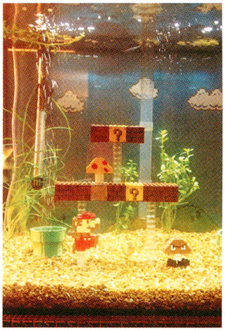
One man turns his fish tank into an underwater World 1-1 tribute.

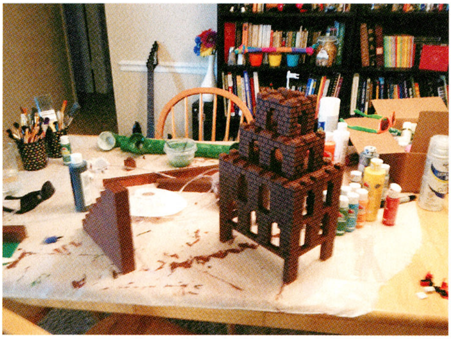
"IT ALL STARTED with a 19-cent goldfish and a bowl and grew from there," explains Cedrick Bearrs, who recently relocated from Detroit, Michigan, to Birmingham, Alabama, and took his fish tank with him. Bearrs received it as a gag gift at his old job, and he wanted to make "something that would be interesting and show off my personality a little...a nice conversation piece."

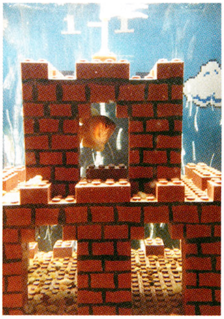
So Bearrs, who knew he would be moving soon, started planning what you see pictured: an astonishing 55-gallon fish tank whose interior has been stylized as an abridged re-creation of World 1-1 from the original Super Mario Bros. After initially planning to sculpt everything out of clay, but deterred due to its prohibitive cost, he turned to LEGOs. "The only pieces I needed to buy specially were two large base plates and the clear pieces to hold up the bricks," says Bearrs. "Once all the elements were built I sprayed them with a white primer so the different-colored LEGOs I used wouldn't show through the paint job." There's an unseen anchor of LEGOs that attach the elements to the baseplate, and the pipe is made from PVC pipe that's primed, painted, and sealed. Bearrs even used a toothpick to finesse some of the fine details. And don't worry: he checked to ensure all the materials he used weren't toxic to his fish.

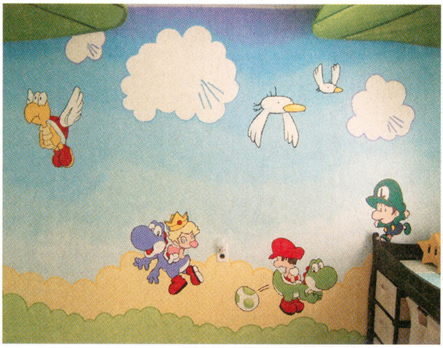
As for the background, it's two large pieces of poster board with clouds, hills, and bushes from the game sliced out with an X-Acto knife and waterproofed with contact paper. All told, it took a month to finish and the kitchen table "was covered in LEGOs and paint that whole time."

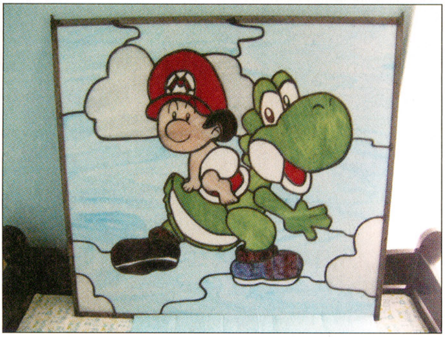
So why didn't he do a water level for his fish? "Water levels are the worst," responds Bearrs, quite correctly. **—DAVID W.**











FANDOM

Baby Mario's Nursery

A labor of love crafted by a couple of gaming superparents

HE MIGHT NOT KNOW IT YET, but little Ian Thomas has possibly the coolest parents in the world. When Seth and Codi Myers found out they were expecting their firstborn, this creative Nintendo-loving Tennessee couple decided to give their son-to-be a whopper of a surprise: this amazing Baby Mario-themed nursery room. We'll pause for a moment to let the "awwwws" subside.

"We wanted to make a room that we would have wanted when we were little," says Seth, who shares his wife's lifelong passion for video games. "When we found out we were expecting, we knew exactly what we wanted to theme the nursery in—Baby Mario."

The room took roughly two months from concept to completion, though a portion of that time was used to shuffle around the storage items they kept in there prior to getting the good news. "We both like to paint, draw, and sculpt, so we started figuring it out," Seth explains. "Using an official Nintendo Power Player's Guide as a reference, [Codi] used a projector to put the images on the wall to trace, then paint. She worked so hard while pregnant to make it happen."

The Myers did most of the work themselves, though they also enlisted the help of a few pals who pitched in with the Yoshi mobile and other decorations. One family friend even crafted a custom 25"x30" stained-glass window of Baby Mario and Yoshi as a finishing touch. It's nearly impossible to be unimpressed; since word about the room got out, Codi has even received requests from people for her to come paint gaming-themed murals for them.

But most important of all, what does Ian think? "He really enjoys the room," reports Seth of his son, who was born Sep. 29th, 2010. "He has a blast playing with all the different Nintendo-character toys and plush dolls. As of right now our current plan is to leave it as it is for a couple years until Ian is old enough to tell us what else he may want."

"Who knows," he adds. "It may turn into a Pokémon or Super Mario Bros. room. I often wonder if I may turn my office into a Chrono Trigger office."

Beyond the cool nursery, Seth and Codi Meyers continue to pursue the "Awesomest Parents Ever" award—they opened their own video game store earlier this year. High five, guys! —**NATHAN M.**

Wii U
X
Y
A
B
START
SELECT
Wii U
MIC
HOME
BATTERY
TV
CONTROL
POWER
EJECT
SYNC
POWER
Wii U

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NEXT MONTH

Are you ready for Wii U? If you're not now, you will be by next issue, in which you'll find Giga-Bowser-sized coverage on Nintendo's ground-breaking new console, including the latest and greatest on New Super Mario Bros. U, Nintendo Land, Call of Duty, and more!

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PERIODICALS

NINTENDO POWER®

To our readers,

After a remarkable 24 years, Nintendo Power magazine is coming to a close: the December 2012 issue will be Nintendo Power's last. As one of the first dedicated video game magazines to launch in North America, and one of the longest-running, Nintendo Power will always have a place in history, as well as a place in our hearts. It's truly the end of an era.

Meanwhile, Nintendo is on the cusp of a new era in gaming. We're busily preparing for the launch of the Wii U console, and we're excited to have more channels than ever before to communicate with you about what Nintendo is up to: on our official Web sites; through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube; via our Nintendo Direct broadcasts; and through your Nintendo systems (did you get my latest SwapNote?).

Thank you for being a Nintendo Power subscriber, and thank you for your loyalty as a Nintendo fan.

Reggie

Reggie Fils-Aime
President and COO,
Nintendo of America Inc.

As a lifelong Nintendo fan, and a charter subscriber to this magazine, it was a dream come true when I got the opportunity to helm Nintendo Power. For the past five years, it's been an honor and a pleasure to bring you the best, most in-depth Nintendo coverage around. We'll do our best to make the last few issues of Nintendo Power something special for you.

Thank you for being part of this wonderful ride.

Chris Slate
Editor in Chief,
Nintendo Power magazine
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Thank you for being a Nintendo Power subscriber! If your subscription extends past the final December 2012 issue, you will receive a refund or credit card credit of the remaining value of your subscription. If you reside in the US or Canada, your refund will arrive within 4-6 weeks after the December 2012 issue; for customers outside the US & Canada, your refund will arrive 6-10 weeks after the December 2012 issue. For more information, go to nintendopower.com.

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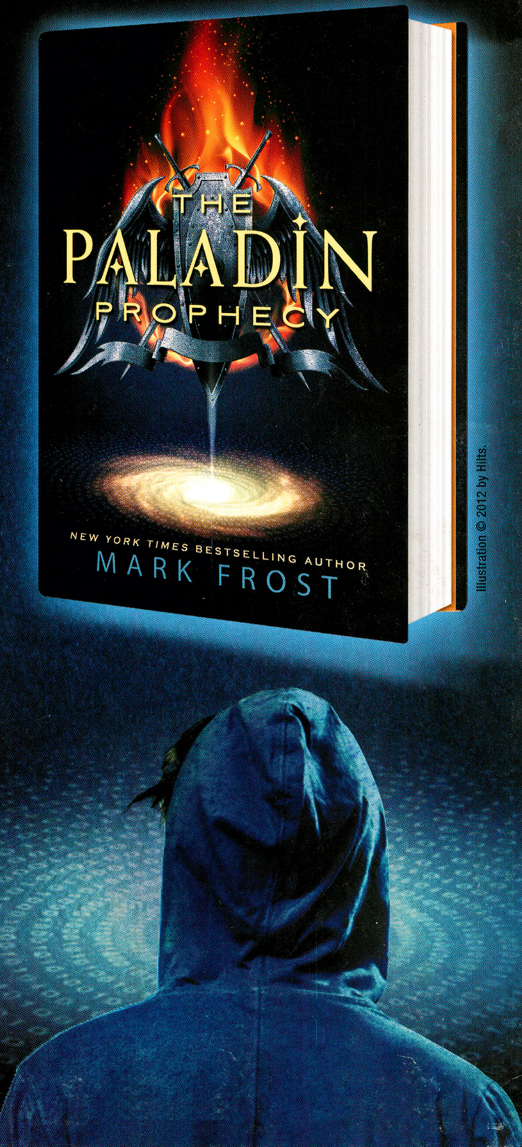
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